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NOTE

CERTAIN of the papers collected together in this volume have appeared in "The Bookman" and "To-Day," to the editors of which publications I express my acknowledgments. For some of the material employed in the Essay on "Pilgrimages, Pious and Otherwise," I am indebted to Monsieur J. J. Jusserand's delightful "English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages," as any must be who deal with the subject. The quotations from "The Song of Roland," contained in the Essay on that poem, are from a yet unpublished translation of the great French epic.

CONSIDERED WRITERS OLD AND NEW

Dr. Samuel Johnson and the Shakespearean Drama

THE fame of Dr. Samuel Johnson is dependent to a ridiculous degree on his biography by James Boswell. That life, written with monumental patience and meticulous labour, is not only the noblest biography in the language, but easily one of the half dozen supreme masterpieces of English literature. That its author was a Scotsman is the complete refutation of Johnson's cherished prejudice against that maligned nation. Boswell's biography is so triumphant a piece of work because he paints the full length portrait of a man of genius and character, whims and whams, oddities and scrofula, and all; because he sets his subject against the background of an obsequious circle, comprising Reynolds and Burke, Goldsmith and Fox, Garrick and Boswell—indeed, half the distinguished artists and statesmen of his age; because, above all, the biographer records, with an unexampled art and fullness, the conversation of the most incisive and finished talker of a tongue-tied race. I grudge, however, that Boswell's work has not sent more students from Johnson's life to Johnson's writings. I

cannot think that the interest taken in these writings is commensurate with that felt by the general reader in his life. I doubt whether a tithe of the devourers of that biography, reaching the end, and left with no more Samuel Johnson, hasten to procure copies of the books on which his fame during his lifetime was so insecurely built. Yet these labours include a Dictionary, in which the scholar, single-handed, did for the English-speaking peoples what is usually accomplished by the concentrated effort of an exhausted Academy. They comprise also an example of the philosophical novel peculiar to his century ; a series of Lives of the Poets, written, on occasion, of first-hand knowledge, often enough wilful or perverse, but, at least, of unfailing interest ; above all, a Preface to his edition of Shakespeare, which remains his most considered and considerable essay, and is to my mind, on the whole, the sanest and the most competent piece of criticism dealing with the subject. Should it be asked why such a solid body of literature is so cheerfully neglected by the reading public, it may be suggested, by way of extenuation, that the periods of a moralist who habitually thought in Latin, and whose little fishes all talk like whales, present some slight difficulties to the faint-hearted. We all read too much, but yet not often enough, and in our preoccupation with new books falling hot from the press—but, after all, concerned about the business of our day—an eye-weary public may well be excused an omission to re-read the writings of an outmoded eighteenth-century moralist.

In 1745 Johnson printed some critical notes on Macbeth, as specimens of a projected edition of Shakespeare; but although his essay was highly praised by Warburton at a time when praise was valuable indeed to a booksellers' hack struggling to escape from Grub Street, nothing further came of the suggestion. The great Dictionary occupied Johnson's exclusive thought and attention for some succeeding years, and it was not until June, 1756, that he put forward definite "Proposals for Printing by Subscription, the Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare." He promised the publication of this work for the following year, and promptly opened the subscription list. The work did not progress, being hampered by the flow of subscriptions, for it was never Johnson's habit to toil whilst he had a couple of guineas in his pocket. No one, he said, but a blockhead would write, except for money; and whilst he had money what occasion was there for him to write! It required the public satire of Churchill, together with some plotting and remonstrance by his private friends, to induce the sluggish commentator to put pen to paper, and to realize the scholarly conception of an editor's duties indicated in the celebrated "Proposals." But at long last Johnson moved, and in October, 1765—some nine years after the original "Proposals" was issued—at the ripe age of fifty-six, he gave to the public his edition of the "Plays of William Shakespeare," in eight volumes, with Notes and a Preface—that Preface of which Boswell inadequately remarks that had this edition of Shakespeare "no other

merit but that of producing his Preface, in which the excellences and defects of the immortal Bard are displayed with a masterly hand, the nation would have had no reason to complain." It is gratifying to learn from Boswell that this magnificent edition of Shakespeare received at once " the high approbation of the public." It was not equally fortunate in obtaining the suffrages of the critics. Certain of these, provoked by the fact that the famous Preface was a criticism, and not a panegyric, attacked it vehemently. Johnson, himself, wisely made no reply, but left the enduring merits of his essay to constitute their own Court of Appeal.

A student can find no more absorbing and inspiring task than the study of the dramatic works of William Shakespeare. The lucky commentator lives for the time being in a world more vital than our dull, mechanic round. He moves with ideal creations amongst emotions carefully heightened to the *n*th degree by every artifice of art. He follows a narrative conducted with precision to a destined goal, and is entranced by sentiments expressed in language of a quite incredible beauty. But the difficulties and dangers of the task equal its attractions. If these difficulties are apparent to-day when the canon of Shakespeare is practically determined, and a consensus of opinion, on many doubtful matters, has smoothed the critic's path, how far more difficult was the labour of those first pioneers! These earlier scholars were aided neither by unity in Shakespeare's life nor by purity in his text.

They, and we, know very little of that life—nothing but a few dates and facts, supplemented by a handful of legends, which show their hero in no very heroic character. Leaving wife and a young family behind, Shakespeare came from Stratford to London, and drifted to the stage, a calling for which he expressed no enthusiasm. He proved an indifferent actor, but a skilful and ready adapter of plays in need of revision. He proceeded from strength to strength, and produced with amazing facility the most diverse and astonishing series of tragedies and comedies the modern world has seen. In these works he seems to have taken little interest, except so far as they provided a lucrative income. The last infirmity of noble minds, apparently, was not his. He had come through Ambition, as through how much else! Not all of these plays were published in his lifetime, possibly because he considered publication detrimental to his theatrical interests. Probably, indeed, not one was printed with his full consent. Tragedies and petty lawsuits he embarked on with an equal zest. He was an excellent man of business, and, shaking the dust of London off his feet, he retired to Stratford in early middle life to enjoy the usufruct of his admirable investments. One cannot help suspecting that—like Congreve—he preferred to be considered a gentleman rather than a dramatist. There he died, in circumstances on which gossip has not kept silence, bequeathing to the wife of his youth his second best bed.

The enigma of Shakespeare's life is emphasized by his dramatic works. These include the most

delicate evocation of maidenhood, with the filthiest railings against woman. They balance the most virginal of sentiments against the most Rabelaisian of jests. We love to think of the master, after storm and stress, attaining serenity at Stratford, and with "The Tempest." But, perhaps, the serenity we find is just indifference, and the poet, humouring the taste of his public, gives them what they wish, faery and enchantment, Caliban, a wizard and two young lovers—above all, admired Miranda and a happy end. What does it matter! Let it be as they like it.

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

These plays were brought together in the First Folio, some seven years after Shakespeare's death, by the piety of two old actors with no pretensions to letters. Some were reprinted from previous editions, but others were derived from copies used for the purposes of representation. Unrevised by their author, mutilated by the players, they were not edited at all in the technical meaning of the word; and a text collected in such haphazard fashion by two amateurs—blameless churchwardens though they were—and published with all its imperfections on its head, was bound to be full of difficulties and pitfalls for the unwary.

Samuel Johnson possessed many of the qualifications necessary, or at least helpful in a high degree, for an editor of Shakespeare's dramatic works. Bitter poverty had acquainted him with

the elementary passions of humanity in the raw. His knowledge of human nature was profound, extending to all sorts and conditions of men, and it is significant that his attention was largely concentrated upon a similar aspect of Shakespeare's genius. Though no specialist in Elizabethan literature, Johnson had read very widely in that period for the purposes of his Dictionary, and a phenomenal memory enabled him to retain all that he had read. A poet himself—if but a subaltern in that company of which Shakespeare was the chief—his gift should have impelled him to appreciate the poetry of Shakespeare more generously than was actually expressed in his Preface. As humorist and as wit he could enjoy both the horseplay of Athenian mechanicals, and the saucy repartee of idle and luxurious ladies. All his life long Johnson was the companion of comedians. Garrick and Mrs. Siddons—the two greatest names in the history of the English stage—were his friends. He haunted the green-room, until he found the white bosoms and silk stockings of the actresses too much for his amorous propensities. The tragedy of "Irene"—though but a moderate success—gave him insight into the traffic of the stage and the shifts of production. It permitted him also, in scarlet waistcoat and gold-laced hat, to accentuate the remove between a West End dramatist and the shabby refugee from Grub Street. A moralist, fearing God so much that he was afraid of none other, Johnson was of such incorrigible honesty in letters as not to fear to speak the truth as he found it, even of

William Shakespeare. And to conclude the catalogue of his qualities for his task, he was modestly confident of ability to do two things very well—the one to write an introduction to any literary work, stating what it was to contain, and how it was to be executed in the most perfect manner; the other to show why the execution was not equal to what the author promised to himself and to the public.

The Preface and the Notes to the "Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare" contain the proof of the justice of his confidence.

Johnson's edition of Shakespeare did not aim at rash emendations of the text. His was a conservative judgment, deliberately avoiding viewy and clever speculations, and concerned to keep to the authorized version, except where obviously inaccurate. This attitude did not imply a slovenly editorship. It was based on a reasonable conviction. Johnson was a strictly truthful person, whose word must be accepted without hesitation. In this fashion he speaks of his work as an editor: "I have indeed disappointed no opinion more than my own; yet I have endeavoured to perform my task with no slight solicitude. Not a single passage in the whole has appeared to me corrupt, which I have not endeavoured to restore; or obscure, which I have not endeavoured to illustrate. In many I have failed like others; and from many, after all my efforts, I have retreated, and confessed the repulse."

And as with the text, so it was with the accompanying notes. These have seemed scanty and

perfunctory to the disgruntled critic. But Johnson had no talent to make clear the obvious, nor to repeat what was already familiar to his readers. "I have not passed over, with affected superiority, what is equally difficult to the reader and to myself, but where I could not instruct him, have confessed my ignorance. I might easily have accumulated a mass of seeming learning upon easy scenes; but it ought not to be imputed to negligence, that, where nothing was necessary, nothing has been done, or that where others have said enough, I have said no more." It is but simple justice to admit that these notes are a fruitful source of information and of luminous paraphrase, besides affording brilliant vignettes of Shakespearean characters, such as the celebrated note on Falstaff to which we shall recur later on.

Johnson's success, however, does not rest upon emendations or notes: it stands or falls by the Preface. The Preface to the "Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare" is a criticism of a book, that is to say, it is a statement of the virtues and defects of certain plays, considered as printed matter rather than as spectacle for the stage. This criticism is expressed in the terms, and judges from the standpoint, of the writer's century. The eighteenth century was nothing if not critical, since it was the era of Voltaire. It has been twitted as being the century of common sense; and, certainly, this is a reproach which cannot be levelled against its successors. Johnson was a man of robust common sense, living in the century of common sense. He approached his dis-

tinguished subject with every proper respect, but " without superstitious veneration."

The eulogy by Johnson—setting aside certain glaring deficiencies—was both generous and discriminating : " Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature ; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life." Or again : " This therefore is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life ; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies by reading human sentiments in human language, by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions."

If Johnson's praise was just, his strictures were not harsh, and contain much with which a candid judgment must agree. A moralist of Johnson's rectitude scarcely could be expected to acquiesce gladly in the laxer portions of the plays. He complained that the dramatist sacrificed virtue to convenience, and seemed to have written without moral purpose. He found the plots loosely constructed, and their conclusions hurried, the dramatist having shortened the labour to snatch the profit. Perhaps our rigid moralist did not allow sufficiently for the conditions under which the work was produced—" The Merry Wives of Windsor," for example. Dramatists, who write against time, cannot give that patient and unhurried revision which alone brings to perfection.

Strictures such as these did not meet with the approbation of certain of Johnson's contemporaries. Their position was reinforced in the early nineteenth century by a group of writers of the highest distinction. These scholars canalized the stream of Shakespearean discussion within the banks between which it has run to this day. Reverence for, and devotion to, the greatest of Englishmen did not permit them to indulge in the luxury of criticism.

> We do it wrong, being so majestical,
> To offer it the show of violence.

Appreciation was their business. It was not their province to separate the sheep from the goats, but rather to penetrate the recesses of the poet's mind, and to witness his transfiguration on the peaks. They breathed an atmosphere to which their forerunner was not accustomed, and were free of chambers in their master's mansion to which he had no key. The choicest flavours of the Shakespearean vintage were grateful to their palate. If they had not the fundamental horse-sense of Johnson, theirs was a sensibility far more delicate than his. Not a student of Shakespeare but owes these men abiding gratitude for a more liberal prospect ; and, certainly, I make no hint of reproach against them, since their names are Coleridge and Hazlitt and Lamb.

Had this loyalty to Shakespeare's memory developed in a reasonable spirit there would be no word to add. But these distinguished writers founded a school, and the tradition of that school

passed from appreciation into mere panegyric and dithyramb. A famous critic and poet—whose criticism, whilst generally sane, was subject to curious aberrations—wrote a well-known sonnet on Shakespeare, commencing, "Others abide our question—thou art free." I could not name any mortal artist, and decidedly not Shakespeare, of whom this should be said. God Almighty may well be above question, but none other; and, oddly enough, Matthew Arnold—though excepting Shakespeare—did not consider the God of his fathers beyond his judgment. To such later extravagances—to this *on the knee* attitude—I prefer infinitely the manly independence of the rugged eighteenth century moralist, despite defects inseparable from the age in which he lived, and from the limitations of his critical equipment.

Dr. Johnson's Preface is the criticism of a Book of Plays, rather than of certain acting dramas. He wrote so because of his rooted prejudice against the actor, whom he considered as a fellow who stuck a hump on his back and called himself Richard the Third. Possibly the feeling took its origin from some obscure jealousy of Garrick, who, coming to town penniless, with his former schoolmaster, quickly rose to fame and position, and whom Johnson permitted none but himself either to applaud or to blame. Physical disabilities would not, in any case, have allowed Johnson to shine as a dramatic critic. He was so near-sighted that to enjoy the performance he must be seated in the wings; and so deaf that, when

before the footlights, he could not follow the dialogue spoken on the stage.

Infirmity and prejudice hindered Johnson from appreciating to the full the best representation of the greater Shakespearean characters seen upon the stage. An actor's fame is brief, depending, as it does, upon his audience, and upon the report that audience leaves behind. We know from many accounts, and more particularly from Partridge's description of Hamlet in "Tom Jones," that Garrick was a supreme and versatile actor. Johnson admired him, as "a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage—as a shadow." When pressed by Boswell's, "But has he not brought Shakespeare into notice?" Johnson demurred, "Sir, to allow that would be to lampoon the age. Many of Shakespeare's plays are the worse for being acted: 'Macbeth,' for instance." It seems strange that the plays of the most vital of our dramatists should be held more suited for the closet than the stage, and that by the man who was privileged to see them performed by Garrick. Later on Hazlitt and Lamb were both to bear much the same testimony. Devotees of the theatre, haunters of the pit when Kean and Kemble trod the boards, they are at one as to the failure of the actors of their day in such rôles as Lear and Othello and Hamlet. Indeed, they seem sceptical as to the adequacy of theatrical representation for the tragedies generally. The passions they resume are too vast—too elemental—to be cramped within the confines of the stage. It is a hard saying, but when Hazlitt

and Lamb concur with Johnson, it ceases to be a pious opinion, and becomes almost an article of faith. Have we not found it true in our own experience! The representative actor of the later nineteenth century was undoubtedly Sir Henry Irving. He was a man of genius, the head of his profession, and in certain parts unapproachable. Yet one does not recall various of his Shakespearean rôles with any particular pleasure, so eaten up was the character by the mannerisms of the player. Few playgoers now would applaud his Romeo; his representation of Lear prevented me from assisting at another stage performance of that awful tragedy to this very day. Irving's genius realized itself most completely in flimsy melodrama—"The Bells" and "Louis the Eleventh," for instance. The greater the play the more likely was the actor to be overwhelmed by the vastness of his material. I suppose each of us sees in the mind's eye his ideal Romeo, or Hamlet, or Cleopatra, and that no artist of flesh and blood can compare with the cherished illusions of our imagination.

The literary insight and trenchant common sense of Samuel Johnson were never displayed to better advantage than in the central passage of the Preface dealing with Shakespeare's attitude to the Unities. A consensus of opinion, of poets and critics alike, derived from antiquity, demanded that a comedy or tragedy should observe certain rules as part of its organic being. These rules prescribed that the plot of a play should not be disturbed by intervals of time; that it should

develop and conclude in one place ; that the action should be resolved from cause to effect in orderly sequence. It is clear that such laws could not apply to chronicle plays, which by their very nature are impatient of time and place, and, quite possibly, of action. Such principles were framed, in the first instance, in the hope of making the drama credible, and of reducing jolts and jars, by passage from place to place and from year to year, to a minimum. They exhibited also a high æsthetic ideal. All art is selection, and an economy, practised with so ascetic a discipline, only permitted the Fable to be presented before an audience, when burning at a white heat. The indulgence that was granted of necessity to the Histories Shakespeare extended, as by right, to his Tragedies and Comedies. In so doing the dramatist seemed to have descended from the mountains to the plain, and given himself into the hands of his adversaries. It speaks emphatically for Johnson's honesty that he, a classic in every fibre and instinct, moved with his heaviest artillery to the support of his endangered chief. Johnson's loyalty to Shakespeare was apparent in the manifest hesitation and misgivings with which he defended the dramatist's position. He minimized the audacity of this defiance of authority, by pointing out that unity of action, at least, was commonly observed in Shakespeare's plays, they having a beginning, a middle, and an end. For the rest, he contended that no dramatic fable is taken for reality by the spectator, who well knows that he is assisting at a fiction, and is not disturbed

greatly whether the action passes in Rome, or in half a dozen other cities besides; whether the action corresponds with the actual three hours' traffic of the stage, or lasts the full four seasons of the year. "Whether Shakespeare knew the unities, and rejected them by design, or deviated from them by happy ignorance, it is, I think, impossible to decide, and useless to inquire. We may reasonably suppose, that, when he rose to notice, he did not want the counsels and admonitions of scholars and critics, and that he at last deliberately persisted in a practice, which he might have begun by chance. As nothing is essential to the fable, but unity of action, and, as the unities of time and place arise evidently from false assumptions, and by circumscribing the extent of the drama, lessen its variety, I cannot think it much to be lamented that they were not known by him or not observed." Shakespeare's plays were not constructed with mathematical strictness, and his neglect of the unities undoubtedly permitted him more freedom and a richer variety of treatment. He therefore was well advised to follow the natural trend of his genius. There are nine and sixty ways of constructing tribal lays, and every single one of them is right. But whilst an observance of the unities is not generally necessary to the artist's salvation, yet, considered as a work of art, the drama that accepts most readily their refusals and restraints is undeniably the perfect play. We correct the reality of our earthly cities by the vision of the City of God. We recreate the flawed beauty of

the mortal artist by our dream of Ideal and Eternal Beauty; our dubious moralities by the idea of Absolute Goodness; and our broken lights by the conception of an Absolute Truth. Judged under this species, I feel all Johnson's hesitation; and, personally, think Shakespeare's mighty example an encouragement to tread the broad, rather than the narrow, way.

Shakespeare, having largely dispensed with the unities, dispensed also with the function of the Chorus. The Chorus, in Greek tragedy, was employed to relieve tension, and to bring beauty and peace to a distracted scene. In the Shakespearean drama the Chorus is a negligible factor, any necessary relief being obtained by the humour of clowns. This was a startling departure from tradition, which held that comedy and tragedy were distinct branches of the drama, and should not be combined. The humour in Shakespearean tragedy is nicely subordinated to the purpose of providing an escape from intolerable emotion. It affords also a wonderful dramatic contrast of light and shade. It is kept in tone and key by a fine sense of restraint. When we consider the equivocal jests of the Clown, with his basket, wishing Cleopatra joy of the worm; the Porter, and the knocking on the Gate, after Duncan's murder; the commentary of the Fool on Lear; and the Gravedigger's rude familiarity with Death in "Hamlet," we marvel at the subtlety, and unerring skill, with which Shakespeare unified the relations of comedy and tragedy. It was a superlatively difficult thing to do. It was only

possible because the master was supreme in both arts. He was the author of " Twelfth Night," of "Richard the Second," and of "Macbeth," as well as the creator of Hamlet, of Cleopatra, and of Falstaff.

The bewildered student asks, and asks vainly, where the essential Shakespeare is to be found. The " myriad-minded man " has more than the colours of the chameleon. Does his strength reside in the femininity of Cleopatra, the elemental passions of Lear, the doubts and hesitancies of Hamlet, or the huge Gargantuan laughter of Falstaff ? In our distraction we turn to the Doctors in the Temple, and get but dusty answers. The Doctors cancel themselves out. Dr. Johnson elects for comedy. " In his [Shakespeare's] tragic scenes there is always something wanting, but his comedy often surpasses expectation or desire. His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct." But Hazlitt dissents from his brother's opinion ! " Much as we like Shakespeare's comedies, we cannot agree with Dr. Johnson that they are better than his tragedies ; nor do we like them half so well. If his inclination to comedy sometimes led him to trifle with the seriousness of tragedy, the poetical and impassioned passages are the best parts of his comedies." It is very perplexing. If—wringing my hands—I gloomily acquiesce in Johnson's judgment, it is solely on the merits of the inimitable Falstaff. Falstaff is responsible for more merriment than any other character in fiction, or, rather, than all the other comic characters in fiction put together. He caught on from the moment the boards first creaked

beneath his weight. The public could not be cloyed with "fat meat," and after exploiting his humours through three plays, the terrified dramatist did him to death (as erst Mercutio) lest the engineer should be hoist with his own petard. Even death could not destroy his vitality, for his very passing gave occasion for some of Shakespeare's most piercing strokes of humour. Contemplating Falstaff, Johnson was rent between the reprobation of a moralist and the satisfaction of a wit. This division of the mind is indicated plainly in the note on Falstaff, contributed to his edition of Shakespeare. "But Falstaff, unimitated, unimitable Falstaff, how shall I describe thee? Thou compound of sense and vice; of sense which may be admired but not esteemed, of vice which may be despised, but hardly detested. Falstaff is a character loaded with faults, and with those faults which naturally produce contempt. He is a thief, and a glutton, a coward and a boaster, always ready to cheat the weak, and prey upon the poor; to terrify the timorous, and insult the defenceless. At once obsequious and malignant, he satirizes in their absence those whom he lives by flattering. Yet the man thus corrupt, thus despicable, makes himself necessary to the prince that despises him, by the most pleasing of all qualities, perpetual gaiety, by an unfailing power of exciting laughter, which is the more freely indulged, as his wit is not of the splendid or ambitious kind, but consists in easy escapes, and sallies of levity, which make sport but raise no envy."

Whilst men easily may differ as to whether Shakespeare's greatest creations are to be found among his comic or serious characters, whether the finest flower and perfume of his poetry are included in comedy or tragedy, there will be little doubt that the latter contains the master's most intense and considered body of thought. "The great end of comedy is to make an audience merry." Comedy shoots lightly at its quarry on the wing; and is too frail a vehicle to bear the packed and weighty burthen proper to tragedy. The tragedies of Shakespeare display a wonderful range of interest and observation. Like the tragedies of other dramatists, they are concerned with love, but they are far from making that passion their only, or, indeed, their principal, concern. No poet has written more justly, or more beautifully, upon the sentiment of love, for out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh. The lyric poet of the aubade and the serena in "Romeo and Juliet," the creator of Antony and Cleopatra, the delineator of that mad infatuation which threw an empire away and thought the world well lost, knew love at first hand, and in many phases. He had lived in Arden, with Ann Hathaway, in their youth; and moved with Cressida, that dark lady of the Sonnets, about the Court. Johnson's experience of cold and hunger and nakedness had left him little sympathy for sentimental griefs. "Love is only one of many passions; and as it has no great influence upon the sum of life, it has little operation in the dramas of a poet, who caught his ideas from the living

world, and exhibited only what he saw before him. He knew that any other passion, as it was regular or exorbitant, was a cause of happiness or calamity." As a commentary on these assertions, the late Walter Raleigh suggests, should be placed a fragment of Johnson's conversation with a lady who derided the novels of her day because they treated about love. "It is not because they treat, as you call it, about love, but because they treat of nothing that they are despicable. We must not ridicule a passion which he who never felt never was happy, and he who laughs at never deserves to feel—a passion which has caused the change of empires and the loss of worlds—a passion which has inspired heroism and subdued avarice."

Johnson was entitled to the opinion he expressed in his Preface. He, too, was a lover. The relations between the uncouth scholar and the plain, middle-aged widow who became his wife were often risible, and even grotesque. What is not laughable is the tenderness he felt for his Tetty to his dying day; the prayers he composed, and the tears he shed, on each successive anniversary of her death. In a time which loves lightly, and forgets easily, the lifelong devotion of Johnson to a woman superficially unattractive is a thing to be held in reverence—and fear.

The themes and illustrations of Shakespeare's tragedies were drawn from his observation of life. A family passion for litigation gave him insight into the law's delays. His companions at the "Mermaid" exercised a nimble mind in all sorts of speculative discussion. The relations of the

players and the Court acquainted Shakespeare with the personalities and policies of statesmen. They familiarized him with the intrigues of courtiers, and with those reckless adventurers who sailed the Spanish main. All this knowledge contributed to the sum of his tragedies. Certain of these were occupied exclusively about the business of men, and the women appearing in them are but the shadows of shades. What are "Julius Cæsar" and "Coriolanus" but the clash of irreconcilable political principles! "Macbeth" is the nemesis of Ambition; "Lear" a study in Ingratitude; and that small part of "Hamlet" dealing with love is the tragedy of Love turned sour. Johnson's remarks are very pertinent: "It is from this wide extension of design that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakespeare with practical axioms and domestic wisdom. It was said of Euripides that every verse was a precept; and it may be said of Shakespeare, that from his works may be collected a system of civil and economical prudence."

The ease and felicity, characteristic of Shakespeare's creation of character, and conduct of narrative, the effortless flow of his poetry, never blotting a line, are apparent, also, in the propriety of his reflections. These stream from the occasion, as the sparks fly upwards. Coleridge was so impressed by their force and variety that he hailed Shakespeare not only as a great poet, but as a great philosopher. It is an excellent rule in theology to agree with the saints, and in literature

to approve with the poets. If I suggest that Shakespeare was a thinker, rather than a philosopher, it is because he seems to me to have little systematized philosophy, and no co-ordinated body of thought. His religion is in dispute to this day. Some hold him to have been a Roman Catholic, others not. The one thing of which no one suspects him was tenderness towards Puritanism. Politically he was a believer in the divine right of kings, a source of infinite satisfaction to his stout old Tory editor. An aristocrat by instinct, his sympathy with the tenets of the Labour Party was painfully imperfect. A sentimentalist concerning the sorrows of the poor—always willing, like Rossetti, to give the beggar his due penny—he turned, with something approaching disdain from the crude politics of Jack Cade and the Blackheath hustings. He was less a thinker, in the sense of holding a logical and considered philosophy, than a poet who expressed, with incredible beauty, thoughts which are common to many reflective minds, or were to be derived from the books he studied so well.

The best known and most admired of the innumerable speeches of his plays is the great meditation on suicide, spoken by Hamlet. To deliver that soliloquy with propriety and effect has been the ambition of generations of actors. Yet, stripped of non-essentials, reduced severely to its core of thought, that speech only expressed the fear that, in escaping from temporal ills, the suicide may fall on eternal. But the thought is enlarged so aptly, it is emphasized with such

passion and beauty, that what is mortal has put on immortality.

To my own mind, however, the purple patch in Shakespeare is the speech spoken by the wretched Claudio, when awaiting execution, to his sister, in "Measure for Measure." The words were constantly in the recollection, or on the lips, of Johnson, because they made explicit what he would have hid. In themselves they are a statement of every crude horror that a morbid mind, and an unquiet conscience, can fear from death. But, again, the well-worn thoughts are conveyed with such consummate beauty of style and nervous strength that once more the mortal has put on immortality.

Shakespeare, then, is less philosopher than poet; or, rather, he is the supreme poet whose verse transcends even the dignity of his thought. His genius as poet is over all his work. It abounds in the pure gushes of song which break from his every thicket, as in the set pieces on music spoken by the Duke in "Twelfth Night," and by Lorenzo to his Jessica in the moonlit garden. This matchless poetry, on occasion, suffuses a whole scene, such as the death of Cleopatra, by the asp, possibly the high-water mark of the dramatist's genius. I have never seen the part of the Serpent of old Nile played by a first-class actress, but, on the other hand, I have never known the scene to fail of its proper effect. The actress has nothing to do but to remain seated—robed and crowned—and speak, with intelligence, the most poignant words put into a woman's mouth. Shakespeare

does the rest. Occasionally a whole play is transfigured, similarly, by this magic of style. The theme of "Macbeth" is the curse of Ambition —a passion in which not all are absorbed. It deals largely with the sin of witchcraft, a subject which some abhor. Yet there is scarcely a play by Shakespeare in which I read so often, because the very tissue and fabric of the lines are of the purest poetry. This is not the place to analyse his divinest gift; but it is hard to palliate Johnson's economy of praise. It may be extenuated by his hatred of books of selections, masquerading as Beauties of Shakespeare; yet, making every allowance, it remains that part of his Preface which one wishes other than it is.

It is certainly fitting that the highest name in our literature should be considered by the representative Englishman, as it is curious that a dramatist of whom we know so little should be treated by the critic whose life is open to us with an unparalleled fullness. A devotion to the memory of both those great men is a usual and creditable feature of scholarship. Professor Walter Raleigh, who wrote with such humanity of Shakespeare in the "English Men of Letter Series," dealt with the latter's critic, in a similar spirit, in his "Six Essays on Johnson." The eighteenth century, by its accredited spokesman, pronounced judgment upon the seventeenth century. That judgment was limited in scope, insensitive in part, but, on the whole, just and even generous. Above all, it was delivered in absolute good faith. To those conclusions we may return to-morrow, in

reaction against a more flamboyant criticism. For—with Ben Jonson—we justify our candour, because we love the man Shakespeare, and do honour his memory (on this side Idolatry) as much as any.

The Work of James Elroy Flecker

JAMES ELROY FLECKER died of a consumption at Davos in Switzerland on the 3rd January, 1915, aged thirty years. His death occurred in the course of the Great War, but was not due, either directly or indirectly, to that calamity. It is likely, however, that of all the disasters inflicted on English letters during the period of 1914–1918 the loss of Flecker was the most grievous. I do not intend to convey by this statement that Flecker excelled in genius every contemporary who died during those five years. Genius lighted upon him less visibly than upon Rupert Brooke in certain inspired moments when he put upon himself immortality. Flecker died young. It is the privilege of many poets, Keats and Shelley for instance; but there is little in his poems—wonderful as they are—to compare with the large utterance of those earlier gods. His work was often experimental—criticism, sketches, a romance, a play—and was largely directed towards securing a firm foothold in the literary world, and supplementing his means of livelihood. The poetry on which his fame rightly rests is unlikely to be read in bulk by succeeding generations. These generations must drag behind them an ever lengthening chain. That chain may be of solid gold, but the weight of it will prove intolerable. Flecker is essentially a poet for anthologies. From these he can never be excluded, and

in them his honourable position is assured. It is a position not to be despised, and which he will share with many delightful poets in ever-increasing number. The real value of Flecker to his time and generation—that which made his death so wanton and peculiar an outrage—was that his example and precept were particularly necessary to the younger writers of his day. His poems were concerned with Beauty, both in form and content. He loved that Beauty should go beautifully; whereas too many of the young men rejoiced to make Ugliness go creakingly. Flecker's youthful contemporaries have always heard him gladly, and his message would have proven of incalculable service during the lean years through which Poetry recently has passed. Like the prophet in the old story he would have opened the eyes of the young men so that they might see the chariots of fire and the horses of fire about the guarded Mount, and know that those with us are more than those against us. Such, as I feel it, is the true value of Flecker, and these themes may recur in this essay devoted to his memory.

Though closely connected with Cheltenham both in life and death Flecker was yet a Londoner by birth, being born in Lewisham on November 5, 1884. A strain of Jewish blood was noticeably his in appearance and in name, for he was baptized Herman Elroy. His father, however, was an Anglican clergyman, later the Master of Dean Close School, Cheltenham; and Flecker took an early opportunity to change the distasteful name of Herman to that of James. He was educated

at Uppingham School, and afterwards at Trinity College, Oxford, where he remained from 1902 to 1906. He then returned to London, spending a term as master of the preparatory branch of University College School at Hampstead, and a few months at Mill Hill, where we are told he found the Nonconformist atmosphere antipathetic. Flecker proved an excellent teacher, for he was interested in the theory of education both by heredity and personal inclination. Short as was the period spent by him as schoolmaster, the duties left a permanent impression upon his work. Many of the admirable translations from the French Parnassians included in his Collected Poems were written in rough draft upon a blackboard for the edification of his pupils in class. A " Scholar's Italian Book " was prepared by him " to enable any intelligent student who knows some Latin and French to learn with the minimum of labour to read a great literature." This primer was published by Messrs. Nutt, with additions by Mr. Thomas Okey, now the distinguished Professor of Italian at Cambridge University. Whilst generously admitting that the Professor's learning was wider than his own, Flecker yet was indignant that another hand should have been commissioned by the publishers to revise and supplement his work, without his knowledge or consent. But " The Grecians " remains Flecker's most informing contribution to the science of education, and the outstanding illustration of his enthusiasm for the subject. It was published originally by Messrs. Dent, but is now reprinted in the volume of

Collected Prose. The odd title has no connexion with modern Greece, but derives from the name given to certain students at Christ's Hospital, more familiarly known as the Bluecoat School. "The Grecians" is cast in the form of a conversation, together with a long, concluding essay. A science master and a classical master, on holidays in Italy, meet at Bologna a certain Harold Smith, in whom it is necessary to perceive a projection of Flecker himself. These three protagonists discuss the theory and practice of education from their various standpoints, any monotony being relieved by charming vignettes of Italian habits and scenery. The friends debate the aim and end of education. Is it to form character; to ground in things likely to lead to worldly success; or is it a culture to enable the recipient to appreciate the finest done in the spheres of thought and of art, "a profitless, beautiful training of the mind"? Flecker, in the person of Harold Smith, decides that the ideal of education is to produce a happy human being. "The Grecians" provides a sketch of the ideal school, together with a scheme for the training of minds of greater and less ability; the whole leading up to the education of the Grecians themselves, from whom the governing class of the future is to be selected. It touches, too, on the interesting question, whether boys and girls should be educated together, pronouncing against the plan for the ungallant reason that all the advantages offered by the system are on the feminine side. It matters little that Flecker arrived at the right conclusion by way of the

wrong reason! The sexes do each other enough mischief as it is, without giving them an earlier opportunity than they commonly enjoy at present. It is easy enough to perceive that "The Grecians" is the work of a poet, a dreamer, and of a hot-gospeller, but it contains also much hard, serious thought, and especially should be recommended to those who, being unacquainted with Flecker's work as a whole, are inclined to consider him as a writer occupied entirely with sensuous symbols expressed in verse of an elaborately technical excellence.

In 1908 Flecker abandoned teaching, and, having decided to join the Levantine Consular service, entered himself at Caius College, Cambridge, for the study of Oriental languages. The College was not altogether a lucky choice. Flecker was never so much at home in the Hall at Caius as upon the lawns of Trinity. The friends he made were apart from his College, but they included Rupert Brooke, and members of that circle of which Brooke was the ornament and the guiding spirit. There was much in Flecker's life making for unhappiness, much which caused him to exclaim that he would choose to be a navvy with a healthy body rather than all he actually was; but at least he was supremely fortunate in the privilege of an education at the two great English universities. The same opportunities for acquiring knowledge may be afforded by other centres of learning, but how different are the surroundings of the student in most of these! Oxford and Cambridge are easily two of the most beautiful towns in England, and

which is the more lovely is very difficult to decide. In either case the venerable buildings of crumbling stone are set amidst secular gardens, and near a flowing river. If Cambridge owns its Backs, Oxford possesses its High. Should one boast the University Church of St. Mary, the other may glory in King's College Chapel. In both the air is enervating with memories, for was not Newman at Oriel, and was not Milton known as the lady of Christ's! Flecker, undoubtedly, would have voted for Oxford; but whether spent at one University or the other, the impressionable years of early manhood must surely be touched to finer issues by influences such as these—at least in any proper participant. Since our own great modern poet could prophesy of his rustic maiden that

> Beauty born of murmuring sound
> Shall pass into her face;

since the Greek would place within the bridal chamber a statue of Aphrodite or Apollo, that the unborn child might receive, through the mother, some impress of the beauty of the god; surely it is permitted us to believe that any fitting child of those Universities may obtain in his measure the image and superscription of that Beauty which is so intimately theirs. Flecker was an exquisite creator of material loveliness, and how much of his gift derived from his nursing mothers who may know.

Flecker's profession now took him to the East. From the time he left Cambridge his life was lived abroad, with the exception of a prolonged

stay at a sanatorium in the Cotswolds, and one holiday passed at home. He was sent by the authorities to Constantinople, to Smyrna, and to Beyrout, on consular service. He was a diligent and conscientious officer, but his duties were sadly interrupted by recurrent attacks of the disease which ultimately carried him off. He married a Greek lady in Athens, who still survives him, and whose taste and interest in literature made her an invaluable helpmate to the stricken man. The love of the exotic was in Flecker's blood, and at first his new experiences flooded his work with the colour and perfume of the East. Many of his most gorgeous poems: the play of "Hassan," like a page torn from "The Arabian Nights," his novel "The King of Alsander" (in its final shape) were written about this time, and reproduce the amazement and zest of those feverish years. There may be no occasion to refer again to Flecker's only romance, so that I take the opportunity to mention it in passing. "The King of Alsander" has never been a popular book with the public, but it is a very jolly and fantastic entertainment nevertheless. The word "jolly" is Flecker's own, and well illustrates the gusto of his performance. The epithet "fantastic" may apply to the mythological element with which its movement is somewhat needlessly encumbered. "The King of Alsander" occupied Flecker's leisure over quite a number of years. A portion of one draft was lost on a trip to Paris; the story was written repeatedly; and the marvel is that the drastic revisions the unfortunate novel

underwent did not sap all the gaiety and spirit out of it. The original heroine—introduced so charmingly as a very sophisticated milkmaid, yoked with her pails—was degraded from her pride of place to something nearly resembling the villain. But taking it for what it is, that is to say, a fantasia on the theme of "The Prisoner of Zenda," in which an English grocer impersonates the King of Alsander, and ultimately marries the actual and masquerading queen of that country of *opera bouffe*, it remains a spirited and joyous entertainment, and I, for one, can read it once and again with a very abiding sense of pleasure.

Flecker's enthusiasm for the East steadily dwindled under the disillusions of experience. He found it beautiful, but of a "terrible and malignant beauty that saps body and soul." The splendour of "The Gates of Damascus" was supplemented by the bald prose statement that "Damascus was a very filthy town, with electric trams, and no drains." He passed much of his time dreaming of the towers and spires of Oxford. From Lebanon he indited the poem of "Brumana," with its homesick yearning for the daisied meadows of England and for the Bournemouth pines. In Greece he composed "Oak and Olive," with its lyric cry for his own county and his own home. Flecker was fated never to see England after January, 1913. In March of that year he was invalided to Lebanon, and from thence moved by his doctor's orders to Switzerland, where he remained for the last

eighteen months of his life. During that period there fell upon Europe the cataclysm of the Great War, and Flecker, a dying man, a stranger in a strange land, harassed by many private and public anxieties, rose manfully to the last occasion. He had ever held that great poetry can only be written under the pressure of great issues. Now, on his death-bed, within a month of his actual decease, by sheer force of will, despite intolerable bodily weakness, he composed "The Burial in England." Line by line, under the compulsion of his spiritual enthusiasm, he beat out his war message for his countrymen to hear, and if the astonishing effort did not result in poetry equal to his highest accomplishment, criticism may well stand silent and rebuked. A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a Heaven for! James Elroy Flecker died on January 3, 1915, at Davos, aged thirty years, and was buried in Cheltenham, at the foot of the Cotswold Hills.

A considerable portion of Flecker's works remained in manuscript at his death. No collected edition of his poems was published until 1916. During the later years of his life his hopes and interests were concentrated on the composition of plays. Of such dramas "Don Juan" and an Oriental farce are not available to the public to this day; whilst "Hassan"—after attaining the proportions of an heroic legend—was published in 1922, some eight years after the dramatist's death, and nine years after the date of composition. Written in 1913 at Corfu and Syria, it belongs to its writer's best period. The story of "Hassan"

is a missing chapter of " The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night," and was most unaccountably omitted by Scheherazade from the stories related for our delectation by that little Eastern baggage. Even such an accomplished story-teller as the Sultan's wife possibly hesitated to venture on a narrative so instinct with pity and terror. Flecker for long, had been a diligent student of Sir Richard Burton, and his book-learning was supplemented by years of residence in the East, and first-hand experience of Moslem men. In " Hassan " are manifest the beauty, the fatalism, the cruelty, and the lust of the East, together with a love transcending Death—the love which raised the Taj Mahal (that fadeless flower of stone) to enshrine the memory of one poor mortal woman. Again, as in our enchanted youth, we are in the fabulous City of Bagdad, with its gardens and moving waters. Once more Haroun-al-Raschid, the Caliph, the Commander of the Faithful, attended by Jafar, his Vizier, and Masrur, his black swordsman, moves about the city on secret errands, dooming, in wantonness, one to the carpet of execution, and raising another to be a companion of princes, at whim and at pleasure. And, as in " The Arabian Nights," the story is developed by means of a delightful medley of prose and verse—an exquisite poetry and a poet's prose—stimulating to the æsthetic sense in the highest degree.

Hassan is a middle-aged and ill-kempt confectioner of Bagdad, of some poetical gifts, who has the misfortune to become infatuated with

Yasmin, a widow of much beauty and little character. Whilst reciting verses beneath the courtesan's window he has the further misfortune to be caught in the intrigues of Rafi, the chief of a formidable conspiracy against the Caliph, and snared in the conspirator's head-quarters, together with Haroun-al-Raschid, Jafar, and Masrur, whose identities are all unsuspected by Rafi. The King of the Beggars discourses to his guests, or rather prisoners, of the dreadful death reserved by him for Haroun, in revenge for the taking of his love, Pervaneh, into the Caliph's harem. A happy inspiration of Hassan's enables Jafar to summon the guard to their assistance ; the insurrection is easily broken, and Rafi, in his turn, taken captive. The Caliph requites Hassan's service promptly, by proclaiming him second only to Jafar, the Vizier, in the Kingdom ; he bestows on him a pavilion in the palace garden, and the more doubtful gift of friendship with an irresponsible and capricious tyrant who was an artist in cruelty. Yasmin forces on the royal favourite the alms she contemptuously refused to the confectioner, and Hassan accepts them to his bitter self-contempt. In full divan the Caliph passes judgment on Rafi and Pervaneh. Their fate shall lie in their own hands : Rafi shall be banished, and Pervaneh become the Caliph's acknowledged wife, or else the lovers may have one day of love, from sunset to sunset, unfettered and alone, but when that day is over they shall die in merciless torment. Such is the choice. The lovers choose death rather than life. The Caliph's boon is received, and his savage

sentence remorselessly inflicted. We see the Procession of Protracted Death silhouetted against the mellow evening sky; whilst Hassan, for presuming to plead for the woman's pardon, is forced to assist, with open eyes, throughout the ghastly business. Hassan to whom the whole world has become bitter and faded as the rose of Yasmin's gift, escapes from "the dim-moon city of delight" and sets out with the pilgrims to make the Golden Journey to Samarkand.

This abstract of "Hassan" gives, of course, no suggestion of the warm tissue of human flesh and silken skin with which Flecker has clothed the dry bones of his chronicle. He was a dramatist born, and of intuition had more understanding of stagecraft than many who toil and fumble after knowledge all their lives. He elaborated a story after his own heart—a story tragic with the beauty and beautiful with the tragedy of life, and he presented and unfolded his narrative through scenes of astonishing diversity and loveliness and terror. The terrible pantomime of torture in the defiled pavilion is followed by a fountain plashing in a garden, where, through the moonlight, the ghosts of the disembodied lovers drift and waste like leaves. Sumptuous as is his decoration, heavily etched as are his contrasts, Flecker did not forget that the essence of drama lies in the conflict of wills. Two boards and a passion make the play. No wardrobe, no stage properties, no scene painting, can compensate for want of character in the puppets of the dramatist. So we have the easy-going and humble Hassan—a man of soft and

kindly disposition—set over against the suave and pitiless, the violent and generous, Haroun. The two women, Yasmin and Pervaneh, make admirable foils; and the appeal of the wanton to the flesh during the love scene in the pavilion (with its curiously O. Henry ending) and her terrified blood lust for the negro executioner, are supplemented and completed by the finer feeling of Pervaneh in the cell, where she and Rafi come to their high decision. Rafi and Pervaneh are indeed great lovers, and their story recalls to mind the heroic lovers of old times—Antony and Cleopatra, Deirdre and Naoise—for whom their passion was all, and the world well lost. The sheer nihilism of the dialogue between Rafi and Pervaneh immediately after death, whilst the faint life in their fading ghosts becomes thinner yet, somehow misses its effect. Flecker doubtless intended that no consolation of a reunion beyond the grave should console the lovers, or soothe an audience. But the acid does not bite in, at least in the printed book; for the stage version gives no opportunity of a judgment. The end of "Hassan" is kept steadily in view throughout. The confectioner's character is not static, but develops sensitively under his emotional experiences. The Hassan who fainted in the Street of Felicity, near by the Fountain of the Two Pigeons, for jealousy and mortification at the insult put upon him by Yasmin, is on a lower plane than the Hassan who swooned by the Fountain of the Dolphin and the Boy, in the garden, close to that bloody pavilion where the lovers were shamed. And the Hassan

to whom the whole world is as Yasmin's rose, and who saves his soul by fleeing from the City of Gardens and taking the Golden Road to Samarkand, is the noblest Hassan of them all. The magical Epilogue is the perfect conclusion of an inspired melodrama. Exquisite as is the serenade recited to a lute beneath Yasmin's balcony it is excelled in beauty by the verses spoken by the medley of merchants, pilgrims, and women who await the opening of the Gate and the departure of the Caravan. As drama and as lyric the poem is in absolute keeping with the occasion. With a very sure instinct Flecker wrote concerning this Epilogue: "If it doesn't give the public shivers down the back when it is acted in its place, I'll never write again." Let us turn from "Hassan" with a few of these entrancing verses sounding in our ears.

We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further; it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow,
Across that angry or that glimmering sea.

White on a throne or guarded in a cave
There lives a prophet who can understand
Why men were born: but surely we are brave
Who take the Golden Road to Samarkand.

Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells,
When shadows pass gigantic on the sand,
And softly through the silence beat the bells
Along the Golden Road to Samarkand.

Watchman—
What would ye, ladies? It was ever thus.
Men are unwise and curiously planned.

A Woman—
They have their dreams, and do not think of us.

Caravan—
We take the Golden Road to Samarkand.

In the course of a stimulating essay Dean Inge observes that Truth, Goodness, and Beauty are the three absolutes of the moral world. It may be suggested that the three absolutes in the sphere of Poetry—at least of lyric poetry—are Beauty, Emotion, and Thought—together with Form, to make the fourth wheel of the coach. To ascertain how nearly Flecker's poetry approximates to this ideal would be a pleasant task. He has, however, in an Introduction to " The Golden Journey to Samarkand " set out his preferences in poetry, and incidentally disclosed the principles underlying his private practice. The correspondence of Flecker's poetry with, and its aversion from, the four absolutes previously enumerated, should be of concern to those interested in modern verse. It is but fair to point out that this " Introduction " need not be unduly stressed. Flecker was desperately anxious to attract attention at the time it was penned, and the argument set forth was intended to be provocative, and, if possible, to induce discussion. It starts by admitting that excellent poetry has been written on good theories, on bad theories, and with no theory at all. The argument then resolves itself into a eulogy of certain principles proper to that French school of poetry, nicknamed the Parnassian, as containing much godly doctrine profitable to our loose and unlaced times. The French Parnassians were gravely preoccupied with form, and

" raised the technique of their art to a height which enabled them to express the subtlest ideas in powerful and simple verse." Their desire in the writing of poetry was to create Beauty. They were objective, rather than intimate. They abhorred the " message," to Flecker's peculiar satisfaction, for, as he pertinently remarks, " If we have preaching to do, in heaven's name let us call it a sermon and write it in prose. It is not the poet's business to save man's soul, but to make it worth saving." The Parnassians, whom Flecker summons in support of this theory of art, are Leconte de Lisle, José-Maria de Heredia, Henri de Regnier, and Albert Samain. There is no doubt that these writers were single-hearted in the pursuit of Beauty. No lace of their Muse's shoe is untied, and they scorn to make naked their heart before the gapers in the booth. These exemplars were the poets of Flecker's predilection. He sympathized with their outlook; he assimilated their philosophy; he was influenced by their choice of subject, and his translations from their poems are astonishing in their fidelity and grace. I would cite, if this were but the occasion, " Pannyra of the Golden Heel " by Samain, and " The Gate of the Armies " by Regnier, as illustrations of Flecker's peculiar gift; whilst if he attempted no rendering of the sonnets of Heredia —which he praised so generously and so justly— I fear it must be considered a veiled criticism of some who rushed in where an angel feared to tread.

Practically the whole of Flecker's poetical work was written with the single intention of creating

beauty. Baudelaire would have held him fortunate, inasmuch as, like Gautier, he dealt only with beautiful things. It was Beauty in its most precise and definite forms that Flecker desired. From his earliest days, as if with a premonition of his early death, he was absorbed in the contemplation of material loveliness. We can imagine him, like the dying Keats, brooding upon the shape and colours of flowers, and taking to heart Mr. de la Mare's injunction :

> Look thy last on all things lovely
> Every hour.

I do not say that Flecker served the highest Beauty—that Beauty which is one of the three absolutes of the moral world—but at least his life was a concentrated effort to appreciate the beauty of the visible and fleeting universe, the shadow of that ultimate Beauty which is eternal. The completest expression of this, Flecker's most characteristic gift, is to be found in his Eastern poems. Some of the most gorgeous of these are included in " Hassan "—the impassioned love lyric to Yasmin ; the sonorous " Song of the Saracens " ; and, above all, " The Golden Journey to Samarkand." But there are others, such as " The Gates of Damascus " (which Flecker himself considered his greatest poem) and " The Old Ships," thought by many excellent critics to be his masterpiece. There is little doubt that Flecker judged rightly in holding these Oriental poems as unique in English. They emphasize the material loveliness of the East ; the passion of the East ; and have a touch

even of the spiritual exaltation of the East. They are vivid pictures, innumerable of stains and splendid dyes, and recall the verses descriptive of the Eastern heroine to be found in that version of " The Arabian Nights " familiar to Flecker's hand.

Scented with sandal and musk, right proudly doth she go,
With gold and silver and rose and saffron colour aglow.

With these Oriental dramatic lyrics fitly may be classed certain of Flecker's ballads—ballads deriving, as it were, from apocryphal Gospels of the Infancy ; and, above all, " The Ballad of Iskander." This version of an Eastern legend dealing with Alexander the Great, with Socrates and Plato, all masquerading under unfamiliar names, and the Greek philosophers very much at sea in their unaccustomed surroundings, only just escapes greatness. The story is absorbing, the colouring rich, the movement progressive. Moreover, it is written with a welcome lightness of touch, a sense of humour Flecker could get on paper, and also over the footlights. This narrative in verse, like his narrative in prose, may not quite come off, but that he had it in him to write a rare good ballad is evidenced by the " Ballad of Iskander."

It may be that in the long future Flecker's work will not be read as a whole by amateurs of poetry, but it is certain that much of it is sure of inclusion in any competent anthology. No anthologist of taste and discrimination could dare to omit from his choice and garland the wonderful poem of " The Old Ships," one of the poems uncollected at their author's death.

I have seen old ships sail like swans asleep
Beyond the village which men still call Tyre
With leaden age o'er-cargoed, dipping deep
For Famagusta and the hidden sun
That rings black Cyprus with a lake of fire ;
And all those ships were certainly so old
Who knows how oft with squat and noisy gun,
Questing brown slaves or Syrian oranges,
The pirate Genoese
Hell-raked them till they rolled
Blood, water, fruit, and corpses up the hold.
But now through friendly seas they softly run,
Painted the mid-sea blue or shore-sea green,
Still patterned with the vine and grapes in gold.

It is impossible for any sensitive reader to miss the brilliant technical qualities which enabled Flecker to fashion a thing of such enduring loveliness. High technical excellencies are obvious in all his work. The elaborate structure, and the complicated rhymes of his Oriental poems, are built up with a sure and unfaltering hand. Not a hair of his Muse's head is disordered, not a fold of her tunic disarranged, not a lace of her sandal unloosed. He is no pedant, and (like Henri de Regnier) uses free verse with as consummate a skill as more familiar academic measures. Simpler metres, too, he conducted with the same deftness, leaving no trace of the pains that went to the making of such artful simplicity. As Mr. Douglas Goldring says in his admirable study of the poet, " If not a great genius, he is certainly a superb craftsman." This preoccupation with Form, Flecker had in common with his Masters, the French Parnassians. In a very real sense he was the child of Paris and of the Oriental bazaar. The

one (as I have remarked elsewhere) taught him how to order his verses, the other to flood those verses with colour and with scent. Every medal has its reverse side, and all principles their disadvantages. Beauty is about the best thing God creates, but material beauty has its limitations, and the Nemesis of an art concerned only with such is a certain hardness, and a lack of appeal to the springs of emotion and thought, which tend to become dry. This limitation Flecker did not wholly transcend.

Two of the four absolutes of lyric poetry, Beauty and Form, are luminously evident in Flecker's work, as in that of his school. Emotion and Thought are less congenial to both. The Parnassians discouraged sentiment, and crushed down any display of emotion with the triumphant query, "The Venus of Milo, is it flesh or marble?" Undoubtedly it is marble, and statue cold. Their poetry was essentially aristocratic, and an aristocracy must not wear its heart on its sleeve. That should be left to "the limbs of Limehouse." Flecker had no yearning to unpack his heart with words. His early excursions into the Land of Sentiment were few, and not particularly self-revealing or convincing. There were facets of his character which, obviously, he could not, or did not, wish to express. Now and then he succeeded, as in the fine lines, "To a Poet a Thousand Years Hence," or in "No Coward's Song"; and in later life, with the shadows fast falling, once and again he set forth in poignant words his sense of exile from country and from home. This note of wist-

fulness is a curious feature of the poet's work, induced by the circumstances of his life. Its perfect expression is to be found in that most pathetic and haunting poem, "The Dying Patriot" (drawn from "Don Juan," his unpublished play), which for music and colour and feeling must surely find a permanent place in the pages of that ideal Anthology, to which reference has been made.

Sleep not, my country; though night is here, afar
Your children of the morning are clamorous for war:
Fire in the night, O dreams!
Though she send you as she sent you, long ago,
South to desert, east to ocean, west to snow
West of these out to seas colder than the Hebrides I must go
Where the fleet of stars is anchored and the young Star-captains glow.

The thought of Flecker is not so distinguished as are other qualities. The principles of his school inculcated distrust of the "message," and, constitutionally, he had no passion for preaching. Being a living organism he changed with the years, and the mind changed in sympathy with the body. The materialism of "Hassan" turned definitely to Christianity before death; and the sensuousness of the Oriental poems to the high seriousness of "The Burial in England." His poetry was not intellectual poetry, but at thirty the wisdom of age is neither expected nor desirable, and the thoughtfulness of "The Grecians" gave every reason for trust that in this respect Flecker's poetry would ultimately approximate to his prose.

It is possible to consider Flecker from two points of view. We may study his work for the work's sake alone, as an accomplished piece of art, concerned with Beauty in form and content—Beauty which in its more select moments is finely touched with emotion and with thought. A poet assuredly not of the highest genius, his poems gradually will fall by the way, until a golden residue remains which the years will be unable to spoil. Or we may regard him as a high influence and an inspiring example for his day and generation ; and from this standpoint his untimely loss did letters an incalculable wrong. The war corresponded with, possibly was the occasion of, a period of anarchy in poetry. Tradition was despised, and the giants of the past were mocked and contemned. Certain young writers made their liberty an occasion of stumbling, and indulged freely in rash experiment. They preferred Ugliness before Beauty ; Moods before Emotions ; showed little capacity for Thought, and a surprising indifference to Form. To such writers Flecker's precept and example should have given pause. Flecker died early, too early to stay the deluge, but his work and his influence remain, and these must always prove of enduring service to the humble-minded servant of English Verse.

The Epic of France

HAD the question been asked at the commencement of the nineteenth century whether France possessed a national epic of supreme importance, we might have been hard put to it to give a satisfactory answer. Nations produce the Epic appropriate to their character and their deeds. Greek legends, Greek myths concerning gods and men, Greek habits and customs, a whole fashion of considering life, are woven into the fabric of the Odyssey ; but in the personality of the hero —that man of many wiles—is noted also an aspect of Greek character which it is easy to recognize as flowing with the current of his nation's history. Again, a Catholic country produced the Catholic Epic of " The Divine Comedy." A son of Italy composed that stupendous record of a Pilgrimage by way of Hell, through Purgatory, to the Mystic Vision ; and the journey left him lean. His poem contains the deepest convictions in the province of Theology and Politics of the representative man of the Middle Ages, and we feel that no country could have written that moral compendium save Italy alone. A Protestant land furnished the Protestant Epic, when an Englishman sat down in darkness, amidst the wreckage of his hopes and dreams, and strove in " Paradise Lost " to justify the ways of God to man.

Has France an Epic comparable with those of her neighbours, and proper to a people which for

so many centuries burned in the forefront of European culture and civilization? If every country possesses the Epic to which it is entitled by right of character and destiny, it should not be difficult to anticipate the lines rightly to be followed by any such Epic of France. France, first and foremost, is a military nation. She has produced more skilful captains than other lands, and her sons, in a peculiar measure, have delighted in war. The Epic of France, then, must in the fitness of things deal with some great battle. Again, throughout her history France has been known as the eldest son of the Church, and, in a certain sense, as that Church's sword. It was France which preached the Crusades against the Saracens, and endeavoured to deliver the holy places of Syria from their hands. The Epic of France, therefore, should be concerned not only with war, but with warfare against the Moslem foe. Its tongue should be touched with religious fervour, and instinct with an essential Christian mysticism. Then, too, the love of a Frenchman for his country is the passion of man for woman. France is ever feminine in the eyes and the mouth of her sons. She is never the Fatherland to her children; their sensibility is something more ardent and tender than the relations of father and son. We should expect, then, the Epic of France to give expression to this devotion to the dear Motherland, and through even the dust of battles and the pre-occupations of religious zeal to turn back to the home which is nearer to their hearts than either piety or war. Battle; faith; devotion to country:

such as these should be the notes of any national Epic of France.

Speculation and question were answered definitely before the middle of last century. In 1837 a French scholar transcribed "The Song of Roland" from a manuscript discovered in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It had been known for long that a *chanson de geste* dealing with the legend of Charlemagne, his twelve peers, and the disaster at Roncesvalles, was popular in the Middle Ages. History recorded, as a picturesque incident of the Battle of Hastings, that a Norman minstrel, named Taillefer, rode vaingloriously in the van of the host, chanting strophes as he went from an early version of "The Song of Roland." For hundreds of years this famous battle-chant was lost. When at last the manuscript came to light at Oxford, it was in the form of a little book, such as wandering jongleurs were wont to carry in their wallets, for the purpose of reference, thumbed, worn, and weather-stained. No surprise need be occasioned by the disappearance of "The Song of Roland," when we consider the conditions under which literature was produced and brought to the knowledge of its public, during the Middle Ages. Printing was not then invented; every work had to be copied laboriously by hand, and afterwards scattered broadcast about the land in an edition running to some half a dozen copies. The real method of publication was by the mouth of the minstrel or the jongleur. A poem, or romance, was composed by some *trouvère*, who would correspond to the poet or the novelist of to-day. A

copy was procured by the strolling jongleur—the professional actor of his times—penned by some clerkly personage, and carefully committed to memory. Viol in hand, and manuscript in pouch, the minstrel chanted his ballad in the market-place. Or in the nobles' hall, before a more select and cultured audience, when supper was eaten, and the trestles cleared, he cheated the interminable hours with perhaps this very narrative of the deeds and death of Roland. And carried away by the glorious story his hearers stressed and emphasized the more stirring and appealing stanzas with shouts of " Aoi," as a relief to the tension, and an ease to the emotions, aroused within their breasts. From these facts there are several deductions to be drawn. Under such untoward circumstances the wonder is not that so much mediaeval literature is lost, but rather that so large a quantity remains, and of so high an average of achievement. The most lovely of all mediaeval romances—" 'Tis of Aucassin and Nicolette "—is preserved for our delectation by the lucky hazard of a single copy. Without that copy the world would have been the poorer by how exquisite a dream! Nor should we even be conscious of our loss, for not a reference is made to the beautiful cante-fable in the whole of the surviving literature of the Middle Ages. " The Song of Roland " itself remains to us in an imperfect copy dating from the end of the twelfth century. It has many gaps, many interlineations, besides evident slips of the copyist, and our knowledge of the original has to be supplemented by the collation of a very Italianate version in the

Library of Venice. Now, this poem, rediscovered by the piety of scholars less than a century since, is surely that Epic to which France is entitled by divine right of character and history. The three "notes" of battle, faith, and patriotism, which evidently must be the themes of any self-respecting French epic, are luminously set forth in these inspired pages. But there is more in the stirring stanzas than the drums and alarums of war, more than love of motherland, more than the religious devotion of a fiery soul, half monk, half knight, turned against the Infidel. "The Song of Roland" contains all this, but much besides. It is the Epic of Friendship. It is a noble piece of literature. "It is the first complete piece of literary art in a Christian vernacular." "This great work, clear, bare, gaunt, majestic, stands out like some huge mass of ancient granite on the far horizon of the literature of France."

The genesis of the national Epic of France is a defeat sustained by the rear-guard of Charlemagne's army at the hands of Basques or Gascons amongst the defiles of the Pyrénées, in which Roland, Prefect of the Marches of Brittany, was slain. The Emperor had invaded Spain, being desirous to rescue the land and free the Church from the Arab and Mahommedan aggression. He successfully penetrated the country to the Ebro, but was unable to reduce Saragossa; and news of an insurrection in Saxony induced him to return to Aix. Charlemagne took tribute and hostages from the Saracens, and his main army withdrew to France, without opposition. His rear-guard was

less fortunate. The hostile mountaineers of the Pyrénées watched its movements from their formidable heights; and, when the body was committed irrevocably to the narrow pass, they rolled rocks and great stones upon the helpless soldiery from above, and after these had done their work, with one wild rush they threw their disorganized victims into the valley below. There, within sight of home, the rearward was butchered to the last man, and amongst them Roland. It was not defeat, it was annihilation, and was never avenged. This is the trivial historical foundation on which so imposing and lasting a superstructure is erected. It occurred on the 15th August, 778.

Between the date of the combat at Roncesvalles and the date of the composition of the Oxford "Song of Roland" (say in the early twelfth century) is a matter of some 340 years. During that interval a vast accretion of legend gathered about the persons of Charlemagne and Roland, and that far-off battle in the Pyrénées, comparable with the stories which a little later grew around King Arthur and his knights. The grand historical figure of Charlemagne would seem sufficiently dignified in the plain, sober facts of biography, without the meretricious allurements of romance. He was but thirty-six years of age at the date of Roncesvalles, but the pagan king, his adversary, insists that he must be more than 200 years old. Even 'The Song of Roland" recurs continually to his long white beard. Mediaeval literature overflows with Charlemagne's adventures, and

those of his twelve peers, not always edifying in character. There was much in the Emperor's private life not usually associated with pious practice, but the Middle Ages persisted in regarding him as a saint, and in giving him unofficial canonization. His altars abounded, and in a window of Chartres Cathedral he and Roland are provided with aureoles. So far as Roland was concerned the romancer had a free hand, and took full advantage of his opportunity. The modest Prefect of the Marches of Brittany became Charlemagne's sister's son, for there was none to contradict. He was the Emperor's right hand in war, a great captain, a conqueror of many towns and peoples for his lord, which he willingly enumerates with a fine appreciation of his own qualities. He was placed by Dante with Charlemagne amongst the soldier saints in the Fifth Heaven of the Paradise ; and Dante was a candid person, and a very diligent custodian of the Gate. Roland is the born hero, with all the virtues and defects which endear a hero to his public. He was brave to rashness ; hasty, but chivalrous in temper ; arresting in attitude ; pious, but not pious overmuch. The surprise of the rear-guard by the Basques is likewise represented by legend as having an importance it did not originally possess. On that fated day the Peers of France, with twenty thousand men, were foully done to death by Mahomet's heathenry. Despite the overwhelming numbers of the Saracens, the disaster was brought about by treason, for in no other way was defeat to be explained. The French character has always

been prone to account for failure by raising the cry, "We are betrayed!"; not perhaps considering sufficiently that we are betrayed frequently enough by what is false within. Ganelon, the traitor, the husband of Roland's mother, is of the house and lineage of Judas, and, like his master, came to a fitting end. Departing also from the unpalatable facts of History, Legend did poetic justice to the vanquished of Roncesvalles, for Roland remained victor on the field even in the article of death. At the sound of his nephew's horn Charlemagne returned through the passes, and inflicted upon the Saracens an utter and overwhelming defeat. Thus with the death of the Saracen king, and the baptism of his queen into the Christian faith, Legend redressed some of the wrongs so frequently suffered at the hand of History, and brought the story to a fitting end.

"The Song of Roland" is the work of a great poet and artist, whose identity yet remains in suspense. The authorship of much mediaeval literature is either unknown, or else of doubtful imputation. Names were not then printed on title-pages, nor inscribed in gold lettering on countless boards. Much ingenious scholarship is devoted to the elucidation of such puzzles, but without much practical result. To take three peaks of the literature of the Middle Ages. "The Chronicles of St. Louis" is known quite certainly to be written by the Sieur de Joinville, a great lord about the Court and person of Louis the 9th, who accompanied his master on the earlier of that

prince's famous crusades. The author of " Aucassin and Nicolette " refers to himself in one of the verses of his charming cante-fable as " the old captive." This vague description would permit neither Dupin nor Sherlock Holmes to identify him by name with any degree of certainty. One peak is named ; the second presents an insoluble problem ; the third is the most intriguing of the three. The last words of " The Song of Roland " are these, " Here concludeth the lay that Turoldus hath brought to an end." On the authority of this passage many students affirm that to Turoldus belongs the glory of having composed the mighty epic. They have even identified him with a certain Benedictine monk of that name, who came from Normandy to England in the train of Duke William, and was promoted to be Abbot of Peterborough. It may well be so ; but the evidence is not conclusive. Much depends upon the precise shade of meaning to be attached to the word " declinet," which I have rendered by " brought to an end." Turoldus certainly brought " The Song of Roland " to an end ; but was he the poet who was through with the fevers of composition, or merely a clerk, who had finished his task, and completed the copy he was employed to make ? Dogmatism should not enter into questions of scholarship, and for my part I have always before me the heartening memory of that Eastern professor who invariably concluded his lectures to his class students with the words, " But, gentlemen, all that I have told you is possibly wrong." It is probable that the poem is the work of a Norman,

who lived, and even may have composed his famous chant in England. The evidence for this is largely philological and antiquarian. It is likely that he was a monk, for the religious feeling is deep and constant from the first stanza to the last. A continuous flow of incidents derived from the Scriptures also bears its significance. The darkness which closed over France the day that Roland was slain is suggested obviously by the Biblical narrative of the Crucifixion. The episode of Joshua and the Sun, is paralleled by the lengthening of the day of Charlemagne's vengeance. The Emperor's prayer before battle with the Babylonian Admiral, contains references to Jonah, Daniel, the Three Children, and the sparing of Nineveh. That this monk delighted in knightly deeds, and in all the show and panoply of war, does not affect the argument, nor even imply, necessarily, that he had mistaken his vocation. He may have come of noble race, for many a member of such a family was a monk under discipline, though, perhaps, he would have moved more easily in the mail of the Templars or the St. John Hospitallers (had that been possible) even than in the black gown of the Benedictines. Further than this it does not seem wise at present to commit oneself on the subject of the authorship of " La Chanson de Roland."

The form of " The Song of Roland " presents some peculiarities to modern readers. It is composed in stanzas varying in length, and it depends upon assonance more than upon rhyme. Assonance is the word employed to denote reliance upon

similarity of vowel, rather than upon the value of any consonant sound, at the end of a line. A twentieth century reader undoubtedly will find assonance a very poor substitute for rhyme, however much he may make the best of a bad job. We may remind ourselves that " The Song of Roland " was intended to be heard, not read, and that chanted in recitative the absence of any clash of rhyme would be the less noticeable. The position may be maintained without any passionate conviction. Our Anglo-Saxon ancestors delighted in alliterative verse, but moderns have to employ the artifice very discreetly to obtain any commensurate effect. England has an incomparable school of Poetry built up upon blank verse and rhyme. We appreciate these by the accident of birth and language, but undoubtedly assonance is an acquired taste, and never welcomed gladly. That assonance is a form of art thoroughly outworn if used at any length, was pushed home by the publication in 1919 of Captain Scott-Moncrieff's monumental rendering of " The Song of Roland." It was the translator's endeavour to duplicate the Norman original with an English version which carefully reproduced the rugged structure of the poem, together with its scheme of assonance. Captain Scott-Moncrieff is a distinguished man of letters, a skilled translator, and realized his intention perfectly. But assonance certainly handicaps his version very hardly. Here is one stanza, by way of illustration. It deals with the approach of the Paynim army to give battle to the rearward :

Oliver mounts upon a lofty peak,
Looks to his right upon the valley green,
The pagan tribes approaching there appear ;
He calls Rollanz, his companion, to see ;
" What sound is this come out of Spain, we hear,
What hauberks bright, what helmets these that gleam ?
They'll smite our Franks with fury past belief,
He knew it, Guenes, the traitor and the thief,
Who chose us out before the king, our chief."
Answers the Count Rollanz : " Oliver, cease,
That man is my good-father ; hold thy peace."

I think it will be recognized that assonance—when kept strictly apart and distinct from rhyme—is too archaic and outworn a convention for modern use, and has been discarded wisely by the artistic instinct of the generations.

Before proceeding to the discussion of some of the more arresting features of " The Song of Roland," and offering some quotations from its pages, it may be of assistance to give in brief abstract the essentials of the story. This can be done quite baldly, for some indication must have been gathered of its purport already, and the familiar legend is likely to be known of all who read these pages. Charlemagne has waged war for seven years against Marsile, the King of Spain. At the commencement of the poem Marsile sends to the Emperor an embassy, with gifts, proffering peace, and promising that, so he will withdraw beyond the Pyrénées, Marsile will seek his Court at Aix, do homage, and become a baptized Christtian. On the suggestion of Roland, Charlemagne despatches Ganelon—the husband of the Emperor's sister, and Roland's stepfather—at dire

personal risk, to arrange terms. Ganelon strongly resents his mission, but goes, and returns with peace. In pursuance of his own private griefs and quarrel with his wife's son, he had also conspired with the Saracens that they should fall upon the Frankish rear-guard, under the command of Roland in the passes of the Pyrénées. Charlemagne returns to France, leaving Roland in charge of the rearward, which is ambushed by the Arabs in overwhelming force at Roncesvalles. The armies clash together, and the Crescent is set over against the Cross. Despite the persuasion of Oliver—his close companion and the brother of Aude, his affianced wife—Roland refuses to sound his horn and give warning of their peril, lest he should be made a song by the folk of France. When at last he consents to sound the olifant it is too late. The French army is nearing France, and is in tears at that dear prospect and the thought of home and all implied in that word. Before Charlemagne can reach the field of battle Roland is dead, with the Peers, and Turpin the Archbishop, and twenty thousand men. But although he was slain, Charlemagne yet found Roland the master of the field. The Paynim had fled before his death, and Marsile, their king, had shut himself close in Saragossa, with a mortal wound. Charlemagne followed hard after, and aided by a miracle, which prolonged the going down of the sun, did vengeance on the fleeing rabble, to the waters of the Ebro. To retrieve this disaster Marsile entered into an alliance with the Admiral of Babylon, who appeared in Spain to his aid, with a numerous

fleet and a most bewildering concourse of outlandish fighters. The Emperor, in a mighty battle, defeats this formidable array of evil men. Baligant, the Admiral, is slain in arms; Marsile, the King, turns his face to the wall (like Hezekiah) and dies; whilst, Bramimunde, his queen, is carried in docile captivity to Aix, there to be made a baptized Christian, by the name of Juliana. At this city, too, is done justice on Ganelon, the traitor, who is torn limmeal by four inflamed stallions. "Now when the Emperor had done justice on the traitor, when he had comforted his exceeding wrath, and seen Bramimunde take upon her the yoke of the Christian, behold day was ended, night had come, and the King lay down upon his bed within his vaulted chamber. Then St. Gabriel, the messenger of God, stood before him, and said, 'Charles, assemble together the hosts of thine empire, and in great strength betake thee to the land of Bire. There shalt thou succour King Vivien in his city of Imphe, for the pagans have sat down before the walls, and the Christians cry and clamour for thine aid.' But the Emperor had small liking for the journey. 'God,' lamented the King, 'how toilsome is my life.' And as the tears ran from his eyes, he plucked upon his hoary beard."

It will not have escaped notice, even in this brief summary, that "The Song of Roland" is essentially an epic of men and of men's affairs. It is concerned with war and a Crusade against the Infidel. A literature so saturated with femininity, so absorbed and preoccupied in its attention to

woman, produces as its early masterpiece a poem in which she is but a transient shadow. Bramimunde, the queen, has no real place in its movement. She shows a figure destined to wring tragic hands over her lot, and to acquiesce in the religion of her husband's conqueror. The only other woman concerned in the story is equally ghostly. Aude is the sister of Oliver, and is Roland's betrothed. When Roland, in his rashness, refuses his comrade's counsel to blow upon the horn and summon Charlemagne to aid, Oliver affirms that, so they escape death, never shall Roland take his sister to wife. The Paladin, when dying, has thoughts of many things near to his heart—sweet France, the Emperor, his kinsfolk, the salvation of his soul—the only being whom he fails to call to remembrance is the white-armed Aude, his bride. " Count Roland lay prone beneath the pine tree, looking with his eyes towards Spain. Lying there many a matter came to remembrance. The noble baron called to mind the goodly kingdoms he had conquered. He remembered the sweet land of France, the men of his kin, and Charlemagne, his lord, who had cherished him from his youth up. He considered the valiant Frenchmen who loved him as their captain. He could not think of these things but with sighs and tears. Yet not even in memories did Roland dare to put himself from thought. He acknowledged his sin towards God, and besought Him for mercy: ' Oh, Father of all, Whose words are very truth, Thou who didst bring Lazarus from the grave, and deliver Daniel, Thy darling, from the lions, save Thou my soul in

peril, by reason of the faults I have committed in the flesh.' Then did Roland proffer the glove of his right hand to God, and from his hand hath St. Gabriel received it. His head bowed down on his arm, and with joined hands hath he gone to his end. But God sent His holy cherubin, together with St. Michael of the Peril, and these coming upon St. Gabriel bore the soul of Count Roland to Paradise." Such was the death of Roland, and in his dying hour was no thought of his bride. Towards the end of the great story, Aude appears for the first time in flesh, to lament her dead hero before Charlemagne. The Emperor endeavours to assuage her grief by the offer of a better husband, his own son Louis, to wit. Aude refuses the consolation, and dies in seemly fashion of a broken heart. She is given a splendid burial, proper to one who evidently had fulfilled her vocation, and had not disappointed the expectation of her neighbours. Bramimunde and Aude, indeed, are but pathetic shadows, and their faintness seems the more spectral in contrast with the solidity of the men about them. These masculine characters are drawn in bold, free lines, with no great subtlety maybe, but full of vigour and truth. It is obvious that the epic moves most easily in a world of men, and when concerned about the business of men.

Although no love story makes fragrant the noisy episodes of the heroic legend, the din of arms is quietened by the tale of a noble friendship between man and man. Such friendships are not uncommon in history, or in one's own experience of life, and frequently have a beauty quite their

own. The comradeship between Roland and Oliver counts with the love of David and Jonathan, and with the friendship of Amis and Amile. It was indeed a love passing the love of women ; and the immortal words of the old lamentation must often recur to the mind when thinking of the companions, lovely in life, who, in their deaths, were not divided. Few scenes in literature are more filled with tenderness and pity than the passage which describes how Oliver, blind, dazed, and wounded to the death, attacked the friend who was closer to him than a brother. It is a very salient episode in this Epic of Friendship. "Now may be seen Roland aswoon upon his horse, and Oliver stricken even to death. Oliver hath bled so deeply that the sight of his eyes is dim, and whether near or far, he may not know a living man. He cometh upon his familiar friend, and smiteth him full upon the helmet, dight with gold and gems. The helmet hath he cloven to the nasal, yet hath not hurt the head. At the blow Roland looked upon his brother. With soft and tender speech he made question, 'Sir comrade, didst thou strike me of thy will? I am Roland, who lovest thee very dearly, and in no wise hast thou quarrel against me.' Then Oliver answered, "Now I hear thy voice, although I cannot see thy face, but God regardeth and He sees. Have I indeed smitten thee with the sword? I pray thee forgive me my trespass." Then replied Roland, "I have taken no hurt at all, and in this place, and in God's sight, I forgive thee freely." So at the word each gave to his fellow the kiss of peace, and

in love such as this withdrew one from the other."

Mr. Strachey's reference to "The Song of Roland" as a great work, bleak, bare, gaunt, majestic, standing out like some huge mass of granite on the far horizon, which already has been quoted, is a very exact piece of criticism. No doubt the poem contains much that necessarily must appear rude and brutal to a softer and later civilization. The words are packed together so closely that at times they can scarcely breathe. The verses are so concise that they seem written in a species of shorthand. The continual recurrence of certain favourite phrases and epithets—such as sweet France, the Emperor's white beard—carry one back to epics which are older, and even more wonderful, than the Epic of France. It is likely they all derive in the first instance from ballad literature, and though now in lordlier circumstances carry about them some tokens of an humbler ancestry. "The Song of Roland" has conspicuous faults, but these are due largely to the date of composition. With all its imperfections on its head, it remains a serious and considered work of art, and a triumphant piece of poetry. In its present form the Epic is, indeed, a highly self-conscious display of artistry. Nothing is left to chance. The big situations are well prepared, and skilfully led up to. Consider, for instance, the story of the great betrayal, culminating in the death of Roland, of the Peers, and twenty thousand men. The motives of Ganelon, the traitor, are perfectly clear, and to his own mind

blameless. The influence of Roland ensured his dispatch upon an errand which he regarded as desperate; and his treasonable pact with the Paynim king was looked upon by him as a prosecution of his private, legitimate quarrel with Roland, and in no wise an act of treachery to his suzerain. That Charlemagne might suffer in consequence of his action was not germane to the matter. Again, take the carefully wrought and unexpected close of the poem, already quoted. Charlemagne is an old, old man, worn by a lifetime of battle and labour. He has avenged the shambles of Roncesvalles, destroyed the combination under the Babylonian Admiral, caused Bramimunde to be baptized, and done justice upon his false vassal; now in his age he turns for rest and refreshment to his chapel at Aix. This would seem to be the natural solution of so strenuous a narrative. But the author has another, and a nobler, conclusion to submit. To the Emperor, on his bed, comes St. Gabriel in a vision, bidding him to proceed forthwith to raise the siege of Bire, where the Christians are in peril of the heathen, and cry to him for aid. And the Emperor wept, and plucked upon his beard, saying, "How toilsome is my life." Such admirable endings come to no artist in his sleep.

The poetry of "The Song of Roland" is austere. The theme does not lend itself to felicity of phrase, nor to the setting of jewels, five words long. It knows nothing of the far-sought loveliness we associate with the school of Keats, nor of the fragile delicacy of "Aucassin and Nicolette." The

beauty it offers is of quite another order. Beauty of feeling it possesses in a high degree, for the love of France runs through the stanzas like a golden thread. But in essence it is a great spectacular and pictorial narrative, full of poignant dramatic episodes. Of such episodes the picture of Roland, with bursten temples, sounding upon his horn to summon Charlemagne to the rescue, is one of the most famous. But equally dramatic, and somewhat less known, is the wonderful scene where Roland collects the bodies of the Peers from amongst the slain, where they have fallen, and ranges them in order round Turpin, for the benediction of the Archbishop. It is an unforgettable episode, this blessing by the dying of the dead.

The Pagans have fled the battle full of wrath and sorely angered. They turned them back to their own realm of Spain. Count Roland did not seek to follow, since he had lost Veillantif, his destrier, and whether it were to the good knight's wish or not, perforce he must go on foot. Roland hastened to Archbishop Turpin, so he might give him comfort. He unlaced the golden helmet from the bishop's head, and did off him the fair, light hauberk. Then he deftly removed the tattered bliaut, binding the bitter wounds with the hems of the garment. Afterwards Roland held the bishop closely to his breast, and very tenderly laid him down upon the grass. Then with exceeding sweetness Roland prayed his comrade, " Ah, gentle sire, I pray thee now to give me my quittance and farewell. Our companions are all slain, even the dearest of our fellows, and it is not seemly they should perish where they lie. If it be thy pleasure I would seek till I find them, and carry their bodies, if I may, and order them decently before thee." Then the Archbishop made answer, " Go, and return quickly, for—thanks be to God —the field is yours and mine."

So Roland turned, and went swiftly about the field, and no man with him. He searched the lowlands, he searched the high places, and found therein Ivorie and Ivon. He searched, and found there also Gerin, with Gerier his comrade; Engelier the Gascon, Berengier and Otho. Nearby he came likewise upon Anseis and Samson, together with Gerard, the ancient lord of Roussillon. One by one Roland bore his comrades to the Archbishop, ranging them in seemly fashion about his knees. The Archbishop could in no wise refrain from weeping. He raised his hand, and gave his benediction to the dead. After he had made an end of blessing, he said, "Fair lords, your lots were evil, but may the Lord of Glory take all your souls to His keeping, and grant you rest in Paradise amidst unfading flowers. As for me, my death hath stricken me with sore anguish, since nevermore shall I behold the face of my King."

Again Roland went from him, and sought very diligently about the field. Beneath a pine, near to a bush of eglantine, he lighted upon Oliver, so that comrade once more was joined to friend. Roland held Oliver to his breast in close embrace. With pain and travail he carried his companion to the Archbishop, and, on a shield, set him in due order with his Peers. Then did the bishop assoil and bless Oliver with the holy sign, and for sorrow and pity Roland and the fair prelate were sorely moved together. Afterwards spake Roland, "Fair dear comrade, Oliver, thou in thy days wert son to the good Count Renier, lord of the Marches, even to Gennes and its waters. Whether to shiver lance, or to pierce buckler, to hew hauberk asunder, or to speak wisely amongst councillors, whether to confound the fool and dismay the ribald, not in any realm at all could be found a better knight."

When Count Roland was certified that his Peers were dead, and Oliver also, whom he so dearly loved, then for pure tenderness he began to weep, and his countenance was altogether changed. Because of his exceeding grief his joints became as water, and being constrained thereto; he fell to the ground aswoon. Then lamented the Archbishop, "Alas, for thy sorrow, fair lord."

This dramatic situation, finely conceived and finely exploited, is proof sufficient of the narrator's poetic gift and distinction.

Embodied in the narrative is Roland's lament over Oliver, when, at length, he had recovered the body of his friend. Such valedictions are very common in " The Song of Roland," as indeed they are in much ancient literature. The dying hero gives farewell to the dead Peers, and to Turpin the Archbishop, just as Charlemagne, a little later, makes lamentation above his nephew and the vassals of Roncesvalles. It is an instinct of the human race—whether by funeral pyre or the open grave—to utter the last farewells, and to unpack its heart with words. English literature contains many illustrations of this simple and dominant human instinct. Putting aside the supreme poetic elegies of our language, as of less immediate resemblance to the valedictions of " The Song of Roland," there are three shorter lamentations in prose it is a reader's privilege never to forget. The first is the lamentation of David over Saul and Jonathan—an integral portion of any literary man's Bible—written with such nobility of feeling, such sense of beauty, such passion of love and pity, as to make the familiar words in the highest degree inspired. Near by this passage from the Old Testament can be placed the farewell spoken by Sir Hector above the body of his brother Lancelot, bringing the " Morte d'Arthur " to its high conclusion. " Thou wert the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode horse ; and thou wert the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman ;

and thou wert the kindest man that ever strooke with sword; and thou wert the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights; and thou wert the meekest man and the gentlest that ever eat in hall among ladies; and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest." And the third is the heart-broken whisper of Marty South above the grave of Giles Winterborne in the last chapter of Mr. Thomas Hardy's novel "The Woodlanders," a modern piece of work, the greatness and tenderness and simplicity of which permit it to stand, without shame, even by the supreme utterances of David and of Malory. Such lamentations as these come uncalled for to the memory when the dead are bewailed in "The Song of Roland." I do not say that in dignity and beauty of utterance the valedictions of the French Epic are equal to the best of these, for it would not be honest to do so. But at least they are of the same order, and in their degree provide an outlet for the emotions aroused by the tragic destiny of so many brave men cut off in their youth by an inscrutable Fate.

I have given the title of "The Epic of France" to this essay, and have endeavoured to convince that both in artistic and moral qualities "The Song of Roland" justifies that description. It might be called alternatively, "An Epic of Patriotism," "An Epic of the Crusades," "An Epic of Friendship"; but "The Epic of France" sums up, and includes, such characteristics as these, and more besides. In its present form the poem has been in existence some eight hundred years.

During that period it was contemporary with the amazing achievements in Art and Literature and Science of mediaeval and modern France. It was contemporary also with her unparalleled glories and disasters, culminating in the triumph of 1918, which has left her supreme in the military councils of Europe. The high moral gifts and conceptions, which are evidenced in " The Song of Roland," are the heritage of her children to-day. Love of country was never exemplified more proudly than during the course of the Great War. Whatever may be the achievements of France in the future, whatever her destiny, whether she increase or decrease—and no civilization is held in perpetuity —whether the virtues displayed in " The Song of Roland " are fated to be superseded by a larger conception of morality, or to remain of essential and enduring concern, there never can come a time when Frenchmen will cease to look back with pride upon this mighty, this representative Epic, standing like some huge boulder at the gateway of their literary history.

Some Characteristics of Mr. Hilaire Belloc

IT is proposed to treat here of some chief characteristics of a man who is not only one of the most brilliant writers, but also one of the most forceful personalities of our time. The literary gift and the dominant personality are not always combined in the same figure. It is possible—as we know—to write like an angel and to talk like poor Poll. There are those who convey their ideas by literature, and through the medium of the printed page influence numbers whom a heart-to-heart talk would leave cold. There are those, again, who stammer painfully with a pen, but who impose their thought very masterfully on their associates through ordinary intercourse. Newman, for instance, was the perfect master of pellucid and persuasive prose. One half of educated England was concerned with the workings of his mind. The Church he left has not recovered from the shock of his secession to this day; the Church he joined still finds in his polemic a most formidable argument and article of propaganda. Newman's chief colleague in England was Manning, and between the two was an imperfect sympathy. It is possible to differ as to the rights and wrongs of their quarrel, but is it not possible to dispute as to which was the more distinguished man of letters. Yet a friend of my own who had the honour of acquaintance with both Cardinals, told me that there was no question as to the more dominant personality.

Newman in the flesh was but a frail and venerable ecclesiastic, with many books to his name upon a shelf. Manning possessed an overwhelming force of character, which emptied you of your individuality, and moulded you to his imperious will. The one was a supreme writer, the other a dæmonic force. Now, Mr. Belloc is a remarkable literary man, who has impressed his ideas through books and lectures on many who do not know him personally. But his strength of character is such that he has influenced some of the most gifted of his intimates so deeply as to deflect them from their natural courses, to draw them into his own orbit, and to impose upon them conceptions of Politics, of Religion, and History, which they would never have entertained but for his friendship. He has even stamped them with his own peculiar idiosyncrasies, foreign both to their temperament and their taste, so that these disciples have raised the master's enthusiasm for pork and his devotion to beer to the dignity of clauses in the Creed, and made them the touchstones of a truly Christian man. We can appreciate why Mr. Belloc is so detested by the editors of certain newspapers, when we remember that these have seen their most brilliant and valued contributors haled masterfully from their journals. Therefore they emphasize gladly Mr. Belloc's faults, suggesting that " among his many transcendent qualities humility is not conspicuous. He would agree with Hazlitt that it is the least of all the virtues. Indeed, he would probably go farther than Hazlitt, and say it was no virtue at all—except in other people." Carried

away by an excusable indignation, these gentlemen forget that Mr. Belloc had already spoken of "humility, the fear of death, the glory of God, the divine thirst of the soul," of such things as being, as it were, his very religion. Much, however, must be forgiven these unfortunate editors, since they can but remember their great exceeding loss. Mr. Gardiner is a good hater, and it is in the following terms that he bewails the defection of Mr. Chesterton from the columns of the journal in which he was particularly interested:

"In the Roman 'triumph' of Mr. Belloc the principal figure will not be himself, but a figure that towers above the rest 'like some tall Ammiral,' whose girth is Falstaffian, and who follows him faithfully wherever he goes. He is a creature of wonderful parts, and infinite jest, of an abounding good nature and a chivalrous spirit. He can perform miracles of intellectual jugglery. But his most miraculous quality is his loyalty to Mr. Belloc. Wherever that impetuous Rupert rides he thunders after him with mighty trumpetings and vast perspiration, scattering death and destruction in his laborious path. He watches his volcanic leader flashing into the lists, and he winds his mighty horn to cheer him on. There is in him that limitless devotion which Bardolph expressed so touchingly for Falstaff when someone said that that knight was perhaps in hell: 'Would I were with him whereso'er he be, whether in heaven or in hell.'" Perhaps the fast comradeship of the two writers dates from a previous existence, for a sober chronicle, published a few years since, gravely

records, 'how in 1365 Gilbert of Chesterton and others, including one Belloc, were accused of having broken the close, houses and chests of Thomas, Abbot of Sawtrey, driven away 12 horses, 18 oxen, 24 swine, and 100 sheep of his, carried away goods and money, and assaulted his men and servants." What provocation, if any, the Chesterton and Belloc of those days had for their violence we are not told. They were both parsons, which makes their conduct seem no better. Returning to Mr. Gardiner's pleasant figure of Mr. Belloc's Roman "triumph," I am not persuaded that the victim chained to the car is of more consequence than the victor in his chariot. Literature is not altogether a matter of playing with words, like coloured balls—however dazzling and dexterous may be the display of the literary juggler. Words exist largely for the conveyance of ideas, and when these latter are derived obviously from a fellow-craftsman, the fact must be taken into account in any estimation of the relative value of the two writers. But it is an ungrateful, and an almost impossible, business to weigh scrupulously the achievement of two such gifted men of letters as Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton, each against each. Any attempt would be the more ungracious, since the modesty—the genuine and excessive modesty—of the latter has induced him to put on record his own opinion on the question. "I have said nothing of the most real thing about Belloc, the religion, because it is above this purpose, and nothing of the later attacks upon him by the chief Newspaper Trust, because they are much below it.

There are, of course, many other reasons for passing such matters over here, including the argument of space ; but there is also a small reason of my own, which if not exactly a secret, is at least a very natural ground of silence. It is that I entertain a very intimate confidence that in a very little time humanity will be saying, ' Who was this So-and-So, with whom Belloc seems to have debated ' ? " True or not, the phrase is a noble gesture, and worthy of Mr. Chesterton at his chivalrous best.

Mr. Belloc is but fifty-four years old, and the mere bulk of his work is already astonishing. The amount of his output is a testimony to his industry, and to an abnormal facility of hand. He can never be comfortably idle. With his own French hero we can imagine him crying, " Rest, have I not all Eternity to rest in ! " Other penmen, however, may rival, and even surpass, his productiveness, for several of our popular novelists write fiction more swiftly than an eye-weary public can read. The wonder of Mr. Belloc's work does not reside in its mass, but rather in its bewildering variety. He is not a single literary gentleman, but rather a dozen literary gentlemen rolled into one. So various is his appeal that it is made not to one section of the public, but to a dozen sections, of widely divergent interests. To such a group he is the composer of verses, both sacred and profane ; to another he is a journalist, ferocious of speech, and by no means squeamish in imputing evil to his adversaries ; to a third he figures as the sober chronicler of the war, with an itch for maps and

diagrams difficult to be understanded of the people. He is a serious historian ; or a student of political philosophy ; or the writer of fiction, both ironic and historical ; or a man with a Faith ; or the facile essayist ; or the traveller with a temperament ; or a popular lecturer ; or a Member of Parliament who shook the dust of the House off his feet, and departed, saying that it was the dirtiest company he had ever kept, and very much besides. It is all very bewildering ; and perplexed by this great business, we seek for a common denominator to include so heterogeneous a body of material and characteristics. This unification, I think, may be found in Mr. Belloc's mixed parentage and education, which make him frankly neither English nor French, but endow him with some of the distinctive qualities of both nations, in a very odd fashion.

Mr. Belloc was born at St. Cloud, near Paris, in 1870, the son of a French barrister and of an English mother. He was educated at the Oratory School at Edgbaston, and spent a term of eccentric service in the 8th Regiment of the French Artillery, to learn discipline and comradeship. He was described in his military livret as but a poor driver, but his experiences have served him well in his subsequent career. Putting off the uniform, Mr. Belloc entered at Balliol, Oxford, where he distinguished himself more in the schools than in the battery, taking first-class honours in History, and becoming President of the Union. For the purpose of his work his parentage and curious training proved of quite singular advantage. An Oxford

education and a year's experience in a French barrack-room are no bad preparation for interpreting the mind of one great people to its neighbour. He thought and spoke in two languages with equal facility, and he knew the souls of two very different peoples at first hand. If he has elected for one nationality, he has not necessarily repudiated the other. It would seem, indeed, as if a blend of the two races might preserve the best qualities of each, and so go far to produce the perfect man. The French logic should correct our loose thinking, our sloppy sentimentality, on the one hand; whilst, on the other, the British reticence and love of sport might prevent an over-absorption in the affairs of sex. Mr. Belloc's character and writings owe much to the virtues of the races from which he derives, and if he shows something of their faults, why, I do not hold him up as a pattern of the perfect prig. The qualities of each contend in his blood, and his books show now as distinctively English, and again as distinctively French—or, should I not rather say, Latin? Perhaps in this we may find a means to unify so many volumes on such very divergent subjects. I propose, therefore, in the first instance, to treat of certain of Mr. Belloc's works which have for the reader a peculiarly English tang; and later to discuss certain characteristics which are more especially Latin. I do not pretend that Mr. Belloc's work is either all black or all white; possibly, like human nature, it is just grey; my simplification is but rough and ready at the best; but I am persuaded there is sufficient

truth in the distinction to justify me in such a treatment of my material as is here attempted, for otherwise we shall be submerged.

It has been remarked that the Englishman is never so much at home as when out of doors, and here, at least, Mr. Belloc's British descent is very evident. A wanderer he has been all the days of his life, tasting on a clean palate the bitterness and sweetness of travel. The Road, and all it connotes, has ever been dear to him, for it is the symbol not only of the open-air life, but of the history and civilization of the human race. "Of these primal things [he writes] the least obvious but the most important is the Road. It does not strike the sense as do those others I have mentioned; we are slow to feel its influence. We take it so much for granted that the original meaning escapes us. Men, indeed, whose pleasure it is perpetually to explore even their own country on foot, and to whom its every phase of climate is delightful, receive, somewhat tardily, the spirit of the Road. They feel a meaning in it; it grows to suggest the towns upon it, it explains its own vagaries, and it gives a unity to all that has arisen along its way. But for the mass the Road is silent; it is the humblest and the most subtle, but, as I have said, the greatest and most original of the spells which we inherit from the earliest pioneers of our race. It was the most imperative, and the first of our necessities. It is older than building and than wells; before we were quite men we knew it; for the animals still have it to-day; they seek their food and their drinking

places, and as I believe their assemblies, by known ways which they have made." The open-air life—the life of the Road, generously expanded to the full measure of its intention—must comprise the most brilliant and the most personal of Mr. Belloc's excursions in literature. It is not only the most pleasurable portion—it is possibly the largest. Mr. Belloc has collected in various volumes some hundreds of essays contributed to the press and to periodical literature. Of these a very appreciable number are occupied with Travel in some shape or form. They are concerned with the idea of Pilgrimage, that is to say, of pious journeys to particular shrines, not by any means necessarily connected with religion. They deal with the chance companion met upon the way, appreciated for some fine gesture or oddity of speech. They are full of the vision of the Hills; or the shining Sea; or of the homely fields, near by the Road, where the villager whets his scythe. And then there are those great cities, the goals of the Pilgrim's quest, cities filled with shops and lights and with troops of the shining ones, for " to the true traveller every open road is a road to Paradise, and the nearest hill but a spur of the Delectable Mountains."

But in addition to many essays, charming though necessarily slight, Mr. Belloc has devoted quite a number of books to his favourite theme. Of these several are purely topographical, and so are apt to leave a faint sense of disappointment with the uninstructed reader. They are quite perfect within their own deliberate limitations, but something

more is expected from their writer than mere topography. Mr. Belloc has not travelled far afield, at least for literary purposes. He is no explorer of uncharted lands and seas, from whom is demanded a severely accurate statement of his discoveries, in the interests of science and ethnology. His wanderings are confined to Europe, and to that portion of Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Lake, which he contends is European too. Writers of travel, with no far-fetched curiosities to offer, are bound to exploit their personality, and to dwell upon the whimsies of the Way. The individuality must be vivid and arresting, and the road must be shown magnified through a temperament. Mr. Belloc's travel writings are as personal as a man in a sick-room. He is of the school of Sterne and "The Sentimental Journey"; of Stevenson and "The Inland Voyage" or "Travels with a Donkey"; of Maurice Hewlett and "The Road in Tuscany." Undoubtedly the most admirable and entertaining of Mr. Belloc's books concerned with the Road are "The Path to Rome," "Esto Perpetua," and "The Four Men." Perhaps it would be better to exclude "Esto Perpetua," since that is really an essay on a favourite historical theory, with certain Algerian experiences added to illustrate the main thesis. There remain "The Path to Rome" and "The Four Men." It should be understood that the former is not a tract to aid in our conversion to the Roman Catholic Faith. Its title is misleading. I have a friend, interested in theological speculations, who persisted in so

regarding it; and I remember the bitter disappointment he felt on perusing its sprightly pages. Emphatically its purpose is not edification. The genesis of "The Path to Rome" is set out in the Preface entitled "Praise of this Book." Entering the church of his native place (the shell of his soul, to use Mr. Belloc's phrase) our author noticed behind the high altar a statue of Our Lady so extraordinary and so different from all he had ever seen before that he was quite taken out of himself, and vowed a vow there to go to Rome on pilgrimage and see all Europe that the Christian Faith had saved. "And I said I will start from the place where I served in arms for my sins; I will walk all the way and take advantage of no wheeled thing; I will sleep rough, and cover thirty miles a day, and I will hear Mass in St. Peter's on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul." To accomplish this laudable purpose, the devout pilgrim arrayed himself in a cheap linen suit, which showed exceedingly filthy, in boots that gaped horribly long before the journey was done; and he sent small sums of money to await him at various stages of the pilgrimage to ensure that he should not live riotously on his way. His book is the narrative of how far he succeeded in observing his vow. It remains his most rejoicing piece of bravura writing, and his most effective attitude.

"The Four Men" is, possibly, a sincerer bit of work than "The Path to Rome." It is really a panegyric on Sussex, written since the traveller would, if he could, preserve his land in the flesh, and keep it there as it is, for ever. Knowing very

well in his mind that a day would come when the holy place should perish, and all the people of it, and never more be what they were, he determined to set down in writing what chanced once when he walked through his beloved county from end to end. Mr. Belloc narrates how he set out on foot from the inn at Robertsbridge, a mile or two from the Kentish border of Sussex, to seek his home. On the way he is companied by three chance acquaintances—Grizzlebeard, the Sailor, and the Poet; and probably it is not straining likelihood to consider these comrades as representing certain phases of their creator's character. Just as the Preface, from which I have quoted a few words in solution, dwells on the transitory nature of things, so the book concludes on the same grave note, and this passage I give in its entirety, for it shows the author's style at its very best: "There is nothing at all that remains: nor any house; nor any castle, however strong; nor any love, however tender and sound; nor any comradeship among men, however hardy. Nothing remains but the things of which I will not speak, because we have spoken enough of them already during these four days. But I, who am old, will give you advice—which is this—to consider chiefly from now onward those permanent things which are, as it were, the shores of this age and the harbours of our glittering and pleasant but dangerous and wholly changeful sea." Whatever of Mr. Belloc's we may neglect, I am persuaded that attention must be given to "The Path to Rome" and "The Four Men." They are indeed a "Farrago"

—a medley of high thoughts and of high spirits; of drinking songs and memorable poetry; of wild and irresponsible stories and the most recollected prose. In them a great writer is altogether and essentially himself.

The love of Sussex seems the bond binding Mr. Belloc most fondly to England. Since Poetry is the fine flower and expression of a man's most intimate and deepest feelings, it should not surprise us if his sincerest poems are concerned with his own particular county. Mr. Belloc has printed a good deal of verse, but not much poetry. The verse is frequently of a humorous character, including the justly celebrated "Cautionary Tales for Children"; vigorous rhymes in dispraise of heretics; and heartfelt songs in praise of beer. It comprises also some bitter verses of a political nature, written to give pain, and succeeding admirably in that intention. But mingled with this tangled yarn are other threads—threads of the brightest gold. There is the poem called "Courtesy," which has its roots deep in religion. There is that famous poem on Sussex, entitled "The South Country," included in every modern anthology; and there are the unnamed verses on the same high theme, which bring "The Four Men" to its fitting close:

> He does not die that can bequeath
> Some influence to the land he knows,
> Or dares, persistent, interwreath
> Love permanent with the wild hedgerows:
> He does not die, but still remains
> Substantiate with his darling plains.

The spring's superb adventure calls
His dust athwart the woods to flame ;
His boundary river's secret falls
Perpetuate and repeat his name.
He rides his loud October sky :
He does not die. He does not die.

The beeches know the accustomed head
Which loved them, and a peopled air
Beneath their benediction spread
Comforts the silence everywhere ;
For native ghosts return, and these
Perfect the mystery in the trees.

So, therefore, though myself be crost
The shuddering of that dreadful day
When friend and fire and home are lost
And even children drawn away—
The passer-by shall hear me still,
A boy that sings on Duncton Hill.

Ore such as this is thick with the purest gold. I do not contend that Mr. Belloc's poetic endowment is deep or rich, or various ; but it is characteristically English in its feeling for landscape ; it rings absolutely true ; and when rapt beyond himself by a congenial theme the result is apparent in poems that will not easily die. One poem, or two, or three, may seem a somewhat slender outfit for immortality, but to be remembered by one perfect gem is sufficient distinction when preserved in a treasure house so glorious as our own.

Although there is much in Mr. Belloc's writings and character that is English of the soil, yet his interests, his habit of thoughts, his cast of mind, and his general conclusions are unquestionably French. He makes no concealment of the matter, for in an essay included in " Hills and the Sea "

he speaks of "that enduring mystery of Europe, the French temper; whose aims, and reticence, whose hidden enthusiasms, great range of effort, divisions, defects, and resurrections, must now remain the principal problem before my mind; for the few who have seen this sight know that the French mind is the pivot on which Europe turns."

No confession, however, was needed of a fact so outstanding and clear. Mr. Belloc's earliest book of any importance was a political biography, and to the muse Clio he has been faithful in his fashion ever since. But practically the whole of this historical work is concerned with France, and with the great men of France. The most notable outside influence on his literary style is also French. Mr. Belloc is the happy possessor of a style singularly lucid and supple; classical in its purity and simplicity; but superimposed upon this solid foundation is much that is owed to Rabelais. To that great, wise, and riotous master Mr. Belloc pays faithful homage—both explicit and implicit—in "The Path to Rome"; for from him are derived those exuberant and irreverent stories, that extravagant humour, and the habit of never using one word where six will suffice, which show so bravely in the disciple's writings. It would seem indeed as if Mr. Belloc preferred the literature of France before that of England. It is odd that so copious a writer, and so consummate an artist, should say so little of the masters of his craft. Essays on Milton and Swinburne, together with an allusion to Wordsworth's personal appearance

which cannot be considered exactly laudatory, are almost the only references to English authors I can recall at the moment of writng. French writers are in somewhat better case. There is a remarkable article on the epical "Chanson de Roland," buried in some back number of the "Quarterly Review," never republished, and apparently forgotten by its unnatural parent. An appreciation of the perfect and cameo-like sonnets of José-Maria de Heredia is to be found in a volume of the essays. And Mr. Belloc has published a volume of criticism on the French poets of the Renaissance, on which I should like to dwell for a little, since books such as this perform a valuable service, for "he that knows some part of the letters of a foreign nation, be it but the graces or even the vagaries of such letters, knows something of that nation's mind." Amongst the many happy thoughts of this happy volume must be reckoned its title, "Avril." It deals with the poets of the Renaissance, at a period when the giant of French literature was but feeling his growing pains. Subject and treatment are alike redolent of the spring, of "that confident prime of the day, that dauntness youth of the year." It is all blue and green; all hawthorn blossom and young corn. A refreshing optimism is sounded from these pages; they front the great issues of life and death with a light heart, for

> The year's at the spring,
> And day's at the morn,
> God's in His heaven—
> All's right with the world.

Characteristics of Mr. Hilaire Belloc

Mr. Belloc not only has selected his representative poets admirably, but—being Latin—has grouped them with a keen eye for dramatic contrast. Thus we have presented in this racy picture gallery a vivid portrait of that puissant amateur and ineffectual Prince, Charles of Orleans, side by side with that of Francis Villon, Master of Arts of the University of Paris, and past-master of other arts of a less reputable kind. The Huguenot translator of the Psalms hangs nearby the fervent Catholic who ran from home in disgust because of his father's secession from the old religion ; and two curious types of Churchmen are displayed in the melancholy exile and courtly prior who resemble each other in little save their ecclesiastical orders. Mr. Belloc not only has something to say of the poets of the Renaissance ; he does better : he also aims at letting them speak for themselves. It is his pleasure to call " Avril " a book of essays ; it might just as well be called a book of selections. What we actually get is a short introduction to each poet dealt with, this being followed by characteristic specimens of his work, and some explanatory notes. If many of these poems are familiar to all lovers of French literature, well, it is always pleasing to meet old friends. If any have the good fortune to read them for the first time they are to be congratulated upon making such distinguished acquaintances. It is a great pity Mr. Belloc has not written more upon such subjects, and we must make the most of what he has given us, though we could have wished the gift to be less slight than it actually is.

I have written several times in this essay of Mr. Belloc as Latin. By Latin, of course, I mean that he belongs to one of the three sisters who derive from the Latin race. France, Italy, and Spain are, in a special degree, of the house and lineage of Rome. Their languages are but separate dialects and variants of one great common tongue ; they instinctively understand each other, because they have the same habit of mind, and come of the same blood. It does not follow that the three sisters are always on good terms. This is notoriously not the case. But their quarrels are only the bickerings of near relations, and may never develop into secular feuds. The three sisters have also the bond of a common religion, thicker even than blood, and this also I had in mind when I alluded to Mr. Belloc as Latin. There is nothing impertinent in writing of Mr. Belloc's religion. It is impossible not to do so, for it is his chiefest characteristic. He flaunts it like a flag in quite a number of his books, and deep as is his attachment to France and England, he would serve under the Papal banner any day, even in preference to the Tricolour and the Union Jack. To him the Roman Catholic Church is the " common bond of Europe " ; and though I can imagine—with difficulty, I admit—Mr. Belloc declining from revolutionary ardour to a safe and timid acquiescence in things as they are, my mind reels at the thought of him abandoning his Faith, even as it reels on eternity, for Tradition and Authority are the concrete foundations on which his City of Refuge is solidly established. It is

humorous to reflect that the deliberate judgment of this masterful mind on this most material matter is regarded by a considerable section of his countrymen as a pitiful superstition. Do not let us deceive ourselves with words. Superstition is but the nickname we give to beliefs which our prejudices do not permit us to share. Mr. Belloc is ever eager to discuss his religion, and to give a reason for the faith that is in him. He is convinced and persuaded, and is out to convert others. In nothing is he more Latin than in his itch to tell of his faith. In nothing is the average citizen more English than in his anxiety to avoid the topic. Let me quote the conclusion of one of Mr. Belloc's most arresting essays, that on Paris considered as the arena—the cockpit, in which faith and disbelief come to the grapple—from "Hills and the Sea": "I came out, as from a camp, into the civilian debate, the atmosphere of the spectators. The permanent and toppling influence against which this bulwark of ours, the Faith, was reared (as we say) by God Himself, shouted in half the prints, in half the houses. I sat down to read and compare (as it should be one's custom when one is among real and determining things) the writings of the extreme, that is of the leading, men. I chose the two pamphleteers who are of equal weight in this war, but of whom one only is known as yet to us in England, and that the least. I read their battle cries. Their style was excellent; their good faith shone even in their style. Since I had been upon phrases all these hours I separated and remembered the principal

words of each. One said, ' They will break their teeth against it. The Catholic Church is not to perish, for she has allies from outside Time.' The other said: ' How long will the death of this crucified god linger? How long will his agony crush men with its despair? " But I read these two writers for my entertainment only, and in order to be acquainted with men around me; for on the quarrel between them I had long ago made up my mind."

Holding views such as these it is needless to say that Mr. Belloc regards the Reformation with a plentiful lack of admiration. He takes up his song and parable against it with a fine enthusiasm. In a late book—amongst other counts in the indictment—be reproaches the period as being responsible for the rise of Capitalism, and for an isolation of soul from which has come our modern disease of despair. Personally, I am no thick and thin defender of the Tudor Bluebeard; and I am concerned here to indicate Mr. Belloc's opinions rather than to offer my own; but I am free to admit that I do not think he has understated his case. Certainly " St. George for Merry England " was once the battle-cry of our race; and of a surety the Invocation and the Adjective have long since fallen into a common oblivion. But I am not convinced that despair came in with the Reformation. I wish it had, for the period of world happiness would then have been longer than I actually think it. Long anterior to the Reformation a criticism of life was painted on the walls of the cemeteries of Italy, which testify to the sadness of

their age. "The people who drew this thing must have had a strange way of smiling, and must have looked always to the ground." These pictures showed Death as turning indifferently from the outstretched arms of the wretched; but snatching the new-made bride from the altar, and leading the reveller to the open and tenanted pit. Such a criticism of life may be true; may even be a wholesome medicine, profitable for the time, but it is a doctrine of despair. Indeed, Mr. Belloc himself in an earlier work on "Paris," describes the Dance of Death once painted on the cloister of the Cemetery of the Innocents in Paris, as "a mixture of irony, of the old moralities, and of despair." It is true that this painting dated from 1424, but it was long subsequent to a precisely similar painting representing the Triumph of Death wrought by Orcagna on the walls of the Cemetery of Pisa about 1330—a full century earlier, and many years before the Reformation began.

To Mr. Belloc's thoughts there is one century in modern European history which rises like a peak above its fellows. In his judgment the thirteenth century is a little gem in the history of mankind. He values it because the Roman conception of an absolute and central political authority then came again into being after a lapse of many hundred years; because the Latin Church, undistracted by schisms, held over Western Europe the same imperious sway as was once associated with Imperial Rome; because the chivalry of the West, united under the gonfalon

of the Papacy, launched on the banded infidel the supreme and spiritual adventure of the Crusades. The thirteenth century may be prized for these, and for many other, qualities, artistic, social, and æsthetic. Mr. Belloc binds the golden sheaf together in a finely felt and highly wrought passage in "Europe and the Faith": "The flower of that capital experiment in the history of our race was the thirteenth century. Edward I of England, St. Louis of France, Pope Innocent III, were the types of its governing manhood. Everywhere Europe was renewed; there were new white walls around the cities, new white Gothic churches in the towns, new castles on the hills, law codified, the classics rediscovered, the questions of philosophy sprung to activity and producing in their first vigour, as it were, the summit of expository power in St. Thomas, surely the strongest, the most virile, intellect which our European blood has given to the world. Two notes mark the time for anyone who is acquainted with its building, its letters, and its wars: a note of youth, and a note of content. Europe was imagined to be at last achieved, and that ineradicable dream of a permanent and satisfactory society seemed to have taken on flesh and to have come to live for ever among Christian men. No such permanence and no such good is permitted to humanity; and the great experiment, as I have called it, was destined to fail. While it flourished, all that is specially characteristic of our European descent and nature stood visibly present in the daily life, and in the large as in the small institutions, of

Europe. Our property in land and instruments was well divided among many or all; we produced the peasant; we maintained the independent craftsman; we founded co-operative industry. In arms that military type arose which lives upon the virtues proper to arms, and detests the vices arms may breed. Above all, an intense and living appetite for truth, a perception of reality, invigorated these generations. They saw what was before them, they called things by their names. Never was political or social formula less divorced from fact, never was the mass of our civilization better welded . . . and in spite of all this the thing did not endure!"

I dare not hope that any appreciable number of readers will be converted to mediaevalism, even by Mr. Belloc's deeply considered exposition. As I have said elsewhere, a mediaevalist—to the average person—is a man with his eyes in the back of his head, ever looking behind him, a grotesque and pathetic figure of fun. But I would ask you to consider whether a doctrine held so passionately by Ruskin and by William Morris in the recent past, and by Hilaire Belloc and Gilbert Chesterton in the present, is not entitled, at least, to respect and to careful consideration. The decline from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century is so precipitate as to be responsible for the adhesion of Mr. Belloc to the great and permanent principles underlying the French Revolution, for between those principles and the doctrines of his Church he contends there is no necessary and fundamental quarrel. And, perhaps, after all, the poor mediae-

valist, with his eyes in the back of his head, is not altogether such a fool as he may look.

Space warns me to bring this essay to a close. It is long enough, and, indeed, over long already. Looking back upon it I am appalled to find how much I have omitted to deal with which should be of interest to discuss. For instance, I have said nothing of Mr. Belloc's politics, that is to say, the results of the application of his principles to our modern conditions. This matters the less because his views on the Servile State and on Peasant Proprietorship can be deduced logically and correctly enough from the qualities with which he admiringly credits the thirteenth century. Neither have I spoken of his novels—of the irony which they derive from Swift and from Voltaire, and of the romance they draw from France. At least I had intended to linger on " The Girondin," so woefully undervalued, with its delightful heroine, all too sketchily presented, and all too scurvily treated. But the fault is Mr. Belloc's. He is really too many-sided and various to be cribbed within the confines of a single essay. It must content me that I have drawn attention to some of the outstanding characteristics of a writer who is one of the most remarkable literary figures, and one of the great personal forces of our day, and leave the reader generously to fill up the gaps —the unavoidable gaps—he must notice in this essay.

The Mediaevalism of William Morris

WILLIAM MORRIS died on the 3rd October, 1896, aged sixty-three years. He had not reached the allotted span of man, although, judging by the work packed into these sixty-three years, his working day had far exceeded in length the average allowed to our pathetic and transitory race. His family doctor wrote " that he died a victim to his enthusiasm for spreading the principles of Socialism," and we can but trust that these principles were worth the price paid. But politics was but one of his incessant and innumerable activities, and the true truth may be more correctly summed up in the words of another member of the same profession : " I consider the case is this : the disease is simply being William Morris, and having done more work than most ten men."

The mass and variety of William Morris's work were enormous ; and in the cold, hard light of facts his famous description of himself as " the idle singer of an empty day " seems grotesque, and even humorous. It is possible to consider Morris chiefly as a poet, and judged simply as poet his output was astonishing. Poets are reproached at times with the slenderness of their volume, but there was no frugality about the Muse of William Morris, and Dr. Johnson could not have taunted him—as he taunted Gray—with being a barren rascal. One of his books alone—" The Earthly

Paradise"—runs to some 42,000 lines of rhymed verse; and his facility of hand was astounding. Joyful legends were current during Morris's life of a cupboard filled with unpublished stories, the overflow of that great collection of tales; and although the amount of the treasure proved to be exaggerated, the legend—like most legends—had a certain basis in fact. It is gravely reported that he once wrote seven hundred lines of "The Earthly Paradise" in one single day. This may seem a feat verging on the incredible, but yet I should not care to deny its truth so emphatically as does Mr. Noyes in his book on Morris published in "The English Men of Letter Series." Of course every method of composition has its corresponding disadvantage, and it is useless to compare Morris with Keats and Tennyson, those self-conscious Artists of the Beautiful. The carving of "laborious orient ivory, sphere in sphere," was not in his way, but what he set out to do, that he accomplished, like the diligent and capable craftsman he was. But as a literary man his labours were not cribbed and confined to verse. There are his lectures to be noted, and those many packed volumes of romance in prose. I will be frank. Much of this prose I love—"A Dream of John Ball," for instance, and "The Well at the World's End"—but some of these romances are not for me. I have an imperfect sympathy with Wardour Street English; and the irritation set up in my mind by Morris's affection for strange and obsolete words and archaic turns of speech, prevents me enjoying some of his prose stories as I should.

At the moment, however, we are only considering the bulk of his work.

Now, it should be remembered, that this great literary production was but a side show, a mere interlude in the life of a man absorbed in the preoccupations of a big business. In April, 1861, at the age of twenty-eight, Morris founded the celebrated firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., and became in Lord Grimthorpe's mordant phrase, a poetic upholsterer. The prospectus of the firm stated that it was established for the production of Mural Decoration, Carving as applied to Architecture, Metal Work, Furniture and Embroidery. Amongst the partners were Rossetti, Madox Brown, and Burne-Jones. These artists were men of genius, but scarcely men of means. They contributed designs, but little capital; and the money, the driving power, and the majority of the drawings were furnished by Morris himself. To meet the developments of the business he was in turn glass-maker, weaver, dyer, and handicraftsman. He employed the vat, and his hand literally became subdued to what it worked in. In process of time the error of business relations between friends grew glaringly manifest. The firm was dissolved amidst recriminations and such sustained bitterness that lifelong comrades never took counsel together again; but Morris continued the firm, and remained its inspiration till the day of his death. Under his direction it proved a most successful business. "He kept his shop, and his shop kept him."

Literature and business, however, were not

sufficient to absorb Morris's attention. A third occupation of his leisure was politics. In his early forties he became interested in the Eastern question, and gradually drifted into certain definite opinions on domestic affairs, largely under the influence of Ruskin, and that famous chapter on "The Nature of Gothic" in "The Stones of Venice." Once persuaded of the truth and the necessity of Socialism, Morris threw himself into the breach with characteristic thoroughness. He allied himself with the Socialists of his day, as he found them, and energetically set about the conversion of England. Just as he, a poet, a man of means, and of University education, had not hesitated to open a shop, there to sell his goods with his own hands, dressed in a workman's blouse, so now he financed and edited unimportant Socialist papers; composed quarrels amongst brethren; was wounded in the house of his friends; preached the pure milk of the word at the windy corner of wet streets, and in certain frowsy halls, down back turnings, to a handful of commonplace people. In such a room, and as one of such an audience, I have myself a vague recollection of seeing and hearing him. Morris had no gift of public speech, and it must have cost him much to leave his delightful Sunday breakfasts with Burne-Jones, and, unsped and uncheered by sympathy, to hurry back to Hammersmith, there to appreciate in his own person the feelings of the prophet who is without honour in his own country.

With interests so wide, so deep, and so varied, with such a desperate effort to combine Gladstone

and Tennyson and Selfridge in a single person, it is no wonder that Morris was worn out before his time, and died without having reached the threescore years and ten allotted as the common portion of man.

At a first glance we may incline to think it strange that pursuits, apparently so discordant and even conflicting, as poetry, politics, and upholstery, could be comprised and reconciled in one person. Of course, it is not really so, for every man, as well as every woman, is a bundle of contradictions. In the case of William Morris there is no difficulty whatever, for those interests are all included in one common denominator—his love of the Middle Ages. Mediaevalism is the hidden root from which his art derived her visible and various flower. Mediaevalism compelled him, against his will, to become a Socialist, because of the comparison it drove him to make between the conditions of life in the thirteenth and the nineteenth centuries, between Manchester and Bruges, for (to quote Anatole France) "cities are like books, beautiful picture books, in which our forefathers may be seen."

I do not know that mediaevalists are particularly concerned at the present time to apologize for the faith that is in them. There are many who look back fondly to the Middle Ages, now that the confusion in the popular mind between the Dark Ages—of which we know next to nothing—and the Middle Ages—with its exquisite and laborious civilization—has been cleared away. These owe hearty thanks to Walter Scott and to the Oxford

Movement, in their separate ways, for reviving interest in, and removing misconceptions of, a most wonderful and beautiful period. But such as these obtained their freedom at a great price. The true mediaevalist is born free. It is with him largely a matter of temperament. He feels homesick for a particular country and time. It is bred in his bone, and it comes out in his flesh. He is persuaded (perhaps quite foolishly) that then and there he should have been born. Such undoubtedly was the case with William Morris from his childhood up. "Not seldom I please myself," he wrote many years afterwards, "with trying to realize the face of mediaeval England; the many chases and great woods; the stretches of common tillage and common pasture quite unenclosed; the rough husbandry of the tilled parts; the unimproved breeds of cattle, sheep and swine, especially the latter, so lank and long and lathy, looking so strange to us; the strings of pack horses along the bridle roads, the scantiness of the wheel roads, scarce any except those left by the Romans, and those made from monastery to monastery; the scarcity of bridges, and people using ferries instead, or fords where they could; the little towns, well bechurched, often walled; the villages just where they are now (except for those that have nothing but the church left to tell of them), but better and more populous; their churches some big and handsome, some small and curious, but all crowded with altars and furniture, and gay with pictures and ornament; the many religious houses with their glorious architecture; the beautiful manor houses,

some of them castles once, and survivals from an earlier period; some new and elegant; some out of all proportion small for the importance of their lords. How strange it would be to us if we could be landed in fourteenth-century England; unless we saw the crest of some familiar hill, like that which yet bears upon it a symbol of an English tribe, and from which, looking down on the plain where Alfred was born, I once had many such ponderings."

It will be noticed that Morris speaks in the foregoing quotation of the fourteenth century, and since this is the century of Chaucer, whom he lost no opportunity of hailing as master, it is a century peculiarly associated with his name. The fourteenth, however, is not the century which would be generally accepted as the fine flower of mediaevalism. The fourteenth century was too full of war and rumours of war; too tormented by plague and famine; it contained the germs of a mortal disease; it included the reign of Richard the Second, that unfortunate monarch in whose public actions Mr. Chesterton discerns the shipwreck and the bankruptcy of the Middle Ages. We are told in Lady Burne-Jones's delightful life of her husband that the thirteenth century was Morris's ideal period; and tried by any rational test his judgment would seem to be justified. For this was the century of Dante—the very abstract and brief chronicle of his times. It was the century in which the magnificent philosophy of the Middle Ages—that is to say, the ideas which governed its political and theological conceptions—

burnt to a white flame. These ideas were both simple and profound. They included the social machinery of the Guilds; with the Emperor or King considered as the guardian of the temporal order of things, just as the Pope was held to be the supreme authority in matters of eternal and spiritual concern. To enshrine its dream of devotion to Womanhood and to the mystery of the Mass, were built the miraculous Gothic cathedrals—those masterpieces of moral elevation—which stud England and France like painted and floriated capitals upon a written page. In those buildings the genius of the Middle Ages found its unique expression. Above the crowded market-place and narrow mediaeval street rose those incomparable churches, "like Gothic Queens at prayer, alone, silent, and adorned." These buildings were lovingly furnished with coloured glass and statuary, so that never since were churches filled with such an entrancing congregation, never had buildings such wonderful eyes. Of these cathedrals the one that made the most permanent impression on Morris was—we learn with a faint surprise—Rouen. Beauvais, on the other hand, cut deepest into Burne-Jones, who was Morris's companion on the expedition. How profoundly the former was moved may be gathered from the following passage taken from a letter written more than a generation afterwards: "Do you know Beauvais, which is the most beautiful church in the world? It is thirty-seven years since I saw it, and I remember it all—and the procession—and the trombones—and the

ancient singing—and the roof and the long lights that are the most graceful things man has ever made. What a day it was, and how alive I was, and young. Oh me, what fun it was to be young! Yes, if I took account of my life, and the days in it that most went to make me, the Sunday at Beauvais would be the first day of creation." Personally I should not have selected either Rouen or Beauvais as my ideal of a French cathedral, but modesty forbids my presuming to wrangle with Morris and Burne-Jones over such questions—and wisdom is justified of all her children. Rheims may be gone, but Rouen and Beauvais, yes, and Chartres and Amiens, yet remain, and with them, by the grace of God and the impotence of the German invader, many another cathedral, to testify to the greatness, the humility, and the mysticism of those master-builders of mediaeval France.

Mediaeval statuary was largely painted, and colour was one chief source of the Beauty that informed the life of the period. The lanes and the market-places were a riot of colour. Our forefathers did not share our modern taste for fine shades and subdued tints. The signs of the shops were gaudy with primary colour, and the costumes of the passers-by vied with their surroundings. Through those streets (to quote Ruskin's "Two Paths") rode "troops of knights, noble in face and form, dazzling in crest and shield; horse and man one labyrinth of quaint colour and glowing light—the purple and silver and scarlet fringes flowing over the strong limbs and clashing mail,

like sea waves over rocks at sunset." Woman, naturally, was not to be outdone by man in any matter concerning the sacred mystery of the toilet. The lady, for her part, wore a shift of linen, " white as meadow flower." Over this was placed a garment of fur or silk, according to the season ; and above all a vividly coloured gown, in one line from neck to feet, shapen closely to the figure. Her girdle clipped her closely about the waist, falling to the hem of her skirt, and she was shod in soundless shoes, without heels. The hair was arranged in two long braids, brought forward over her shoulders. Out of doors, and frequently within, the lady was clad in a mantle and a hood. It must have taken a great deal of time and travail to appear so finished and dainty a production. But to become poetry for others it is necessary for a woman first to be prose to herself.

Before we turn from the Middle Ages to consider what William Morris derived from that period, I should like to add just one word. I have told the truth about the thirteenth century according to my light, but I have not stated the whole truth. There were many things that happened then, probably of daily occurrence, of which it is a shame even to speak. Thinking of these matters we may possibly find ourselves asking the question : Were the Middle Ages really years of exquisite beauty, or rather years of inexpressible ugliness and filth ? " If you love the very words ' Middle Age ' ; if they conjure up to your mind glowing old folios of black letter with gilt and florid initials ; crimson and green and blue pages in

which slim ladies with spiked head dresses walk amid sparse flowers, and trees like bouquets; or where men-at-arms attack walled cities no bigger than themselves, or long-legged youths with tight waists and frizzed hair kiss girls under apple-trees; or a king is on a dais with gold lilies for his background, minstrels on their knees before him, lovers in the gallery"—well, if you accept and limit yourself to all this dainty circumstance, you get sheer lyric beauty, and nothing else. Only there is another side—a side not very pleasant to dwell upon—and it may perhaps be hinted at by saying that such an absolute and elementary necessary of the toilet as a pocket-handkerchief was not generally known in the Age of Beauty. Probably it would be more exact to hold that the Middle Ages comprised many contradictory things—the knight-errant and the sworn tormentor; the altar and the witch's Sabbath; a dream of loveliness having its roots in slime and squalor. These centuries were —in Verlaine's inimitable phrase—both "enormous and delicate." They were great enough to include opposites, and to square the circle. You may love them, or you may hate them, but you cannot give them the go-by.

It is not necessary for the purpose of this essay to dwell at any length on the bare bones of William Morris's life. For those who wish to know these facts every opportunity is provided, since biographies dealing with the various phases of his career abound. The official "Life of William Morris," by Dr. Mackail, may be considered a modern classic; to Mr. Alfred Noyes I have

already referred, and the prefaces of Miss May Morris to the various volumes of the library edition of her father's works are of remarkable and enduring interest. Such is the fascination of the man that no book concerned with his work with which I am acquainted can be reckoned as a failure. When Morris went up from Marlborough to Oxford, his tutor described him as having no special literary tastes or capacity. In the congenial society of new-found friends his essential gift rapidly developed, and he began to write poetry quite suddenly, and with immediate success. Canon Dixon tells how he went one evening to Exeter College, and found Burne-Jones and Morris —those two inseparables—together. Directly he entered the room Burne-Jones exclaimed wildly, "Topsy's a great poet." Then Morris read them "The Willow and the Red Cliff," the first poem he had ever written. Dixon expressed his admiration, and Morris replied, "Well, if this is poetry, it is very easy to write." From that time onward, for a term or two, he came to Dixon's rooms almost daily, with a new poem in his hand. The poems of this period were collected together, and published under the title of "The Defence of Guenevere" in 1858, when the author was aged twenty-four. It proved very much of a failure, for the "Athenæum" remarked that "the book was a curiosity which shows how far affectation may mislead an earnest man towards the fog-land of Art"; whilst copies of the first edition could be obtained thirteen years afterwards. Even to-day its recognized merits are somewhat absurdly over-shadowed by subse-

quent and more popular writings of its author. The beauty of this later work—including, as it does, " The Life and Death of Jason " and " The Earthly Paradise," I, for one, have no wish to minimize. But when one has applauded with both hands the excellence of this story-telling and the charm of the narrative, you cannot help remarking that these heroes and heroines are no more alive than the faded beings on mediaeval tapestry, which they so much resemble. They are gracious and anæmic figures, set with eternal gestures against a background of old legends, from which, somehow or other, all the masculinity is subtracted. I remember Walter Pater asking me had I noticed how William Morris weakened everything that he touched. To those who came in contact with Morris's bluff personality, and followed the stormy episodes of his political life, the contrast between the creator and his handiwork seems almost laughable. At any rate Morris was a man electrically alive to the very finger-tips, and it is just because he succeeded in that early work in breathing somewhat of his own exuberant vitality into the nostrils of his puppets that I consider " The Defence of Guenevere " the freshest and most living of his books. For here, certainly, the characters love and hate, strike with the full strength of the sword-arm, and shudder at the prospect of death. Their adventures, too, are narrated with a vigour which is quite absent from the languid and fluent verse of " The Earthly Paradise." Technically this later method may be the more perfect, but what the poetry has gained

in art it has lost in the quality of emotion, and not all of us may consider the exchange an unmixed advantage. Even regarded from the strictest and most limited standpoint of art I can well imagine that something, and indeed much, may be urged on behalf of these earlier poems. At least they are at unity with themselves, and move consistently in a mediaeval atmosphere, so that we are not disturbed by the anachronism of "The Life and Death of Jason," where Greek adventurers pass to their ships through the lanes of a mediaeval town, and to the ringing of mediaeval joy-bells. It is quite easy to indicate the sources from which the materials for these early poems were drawn. They derived from the "Morte d'Arthur," the Chronicles of Froissart, and old English ballads. For the non-classical stories of "The Earthly Paradise" Morris cast about more widely. They came from Sir John Mandeville's "Travels and Voyages," from "The Gesta Romanorum," from monkish William of Malmesbury, from Sagas, from "The Arabian Nights," and from that lovely collection of French stories of the thirteenth century (including Aucassin and Nicolette) in the pretty Elzevir edition, with crimson binding, from which how many of us first drew and have since nourished, our love of mediaeval narrative. Of this collection of books of travel, history, and legend, the book nearest to Morris's heart for a great portion of his life, and, indeed, until the Sagas swallowed up all other interests, was undoubtedly Malory's "Morte d'Arthur." It was brought to his attention by Burne-Jones. The latter, being too poor to buy

the volume, was compelled, like many another straitened student, to read it by instalments in a second-hand book shop. Morris, who had £900 a year from a very early age, at once bought the treasure, and the two friends became devoted to the cult of Arthur, and to the errancies of his knights. It would be impossible to overpraise the high name of Thomas Malory, the compiler of the immortal " Morte d'Arthur," and " the servant of Jesus both night and day." He wrote, " when English prose was dewy with its dawn, of tales of chivalry already coloured by the setting sun." The Introduction to his book tells us that gold has its dross and the wine its lees ; but his is gold thrice refined, and wine of a perfect vintage. In the whole range of our literature there are not half a dozen books which rank higher than his. Probably it is the finest book dealing with mediaeval matters in the language, and is to be preferred before Chaucer—Chaucer even! From this great book, and from the library of mediaeval tales, travels, and chronicles which has been mentioned, Morris derived a large number of his narratives, and all readers of his poetry know how fascinating those stories are. I am not certain whether the present generation takes any interest in books in which their fathers and grandfathers delighted, or whether it regards them as so much top-shelf lumber, and includes them in a common condemnation, unread. If the latter, I have only to say that the present generation might read worse —and does. The old monastic scribes wrote their chronicles in the mediaeval manner, considering

History as an Art rather than a Science, and were not easily persuaded that because a legend showed apt and telling it was necessarily untrue. Very possibly it was even truer than the Truth. At any rate, to the taste of one deboshed old novel reader, these romances—masquerading under the title of Travels, or Chronicles, or Deeds of the Romans, or what not—are far more entertaining than the generality of the novels of to-day. We all read too much ; and yet not often enough. If we have not read these books, we might give them a chance. If we have read them, well, we can be like Charles Lamb, and when a new book comes out, take down an old one instead.

Morris wrote with the utmost facility. He really sang like a bird on the bough, and was a complete contrast to Rossetti, who described himself as the racked and tortured medium through which his poetry flowed. A very large part of Morris's verse was composed whilst engaged in quite other occupations—in weaving, for instance. Manual labour seemed to set his mind free, and enabled him to concentrate on some intellectual pursuit, having no immediate relation to the work in hand. From the time he left Oxford, and came to live in Red Lion Square, Morris was interested in what has been described as " upholstery." He could not furnish the house to his mind from a shop, and consequently was driven to design the furniture himself. His marriage deepened this preoccupation, for the Red House was intended to be the most beautiful abode in England, and Morris made an intimate study of all the inanimate objects that

go to make a home. With the founding of the firm of Morris, Marshall & Co., the amateur took rank as a professional, and naturally became absorbed in his craft. Several of the articles the firm undertook to supply were really forgotten arts, and before the goods could be delivered Morris had to rediscover a lost process, and teach workmen how to apply his method. We read of Morris having a loom set up in his bedroom, and rising at dawn to toil at his weaving for ten hours a day. The results are to be seen in the wonderful tapestry of "The Adoration of the Magi," designed by Burne-Jones and executed by himself, piously presented to their old University, and now hanging in the chapel of Exeter College. Similar difficulties hindered his work as a dyer. This ancient art was degraded by the discovery of aniline dyes; and Morris—scorning the use of this crude modern method—set about to find the forgotten process from old books and from private experiment. The results were lovely, but garish, and quite in the taste of the Middle Ages. Persons, however, who were accustomed to consider Liberty's as the last word in beauty of colour, were reasonably surprised. It is related that a purchaser went to the firm to buy a carpet for his drawing-room. The poetic upholsterer exhibited his wares personally, but the prospective customer—a little dazed by the unexpected brightness of this primary colour—remarked that the carpet seemed a bit vivid. "If you want dirt," said Morris irascibly, "you can get plenty of that outside."

This absorption of Morris in the arts and indus-

tries of the Middle Ages had one odd result—it made a socialist of him. Like Ruskin, like Carlyle, he compared the Past with the Present—Rouen with Manchester, Amiens Cathedral with the Crystal Palace or Spurgeon's Tabernacle, Merry England with the England of his day, the thirteenth century with the nineteenth—and, frankly, he was not satisfied. To the benighted poet the progress of the ages resembled the progress of the crab—backwards. Morris regarded social politics from the same Pisgah standpoint as Ruskin, as set forth in that epoch-making chapter on "The Nature of Gothic" in "The Stones of Venice," to which I have already referred and which may be considered one of the signposts of his intellectual life. Man is greater than machinery, but the tendency of modern life has been to degrade him into a machine. The division and subdivision of labour may increase production, but necessarily decreases the joy of the worker in the labour of his hands. "Time was when everybody that made anything, made a work of art besides a useful piece of goods, and it gave them pleasure to make it. Whatever I doubt, I have no doubt of that. I know that in those days life was often rough and evil enough, beset by violence, superstition, ignorance, slavery; yet sorely as poor folks needed a solace, they did not altogether lack one, and that solace was pleasure in their work. Much as the world has won since then, I do not think it has won for all men such perfect happiness that we can afford to cast aside any solace that Nature holds forth to us. Or must we for ever be casting

out one devil by another? Shall we never make a push to get rid of the whole pack of them at once?"

There is a movement—a growing and an influential movement—amongst us, which sees a way out of our social and political difficulties, in a return to the Guild System of the Middle Ages. The mediaeval Guilds are misrepresented in modern life by the Livery Companies; and, without expenditure of cheap disparagement, it may be remarked that these Companies have not the same objects and interests as their predecessors. They are reputed to give excellent dinners and generous charities (both admirable things), but it may safely be said that the Worshipful Society of Fishmongers, or the Worshipful Society of Painters, does not include more than a handful of members personally engaged in that honourable but smelly business. The modern Trades Unions afford closer analogies with the mediaeval Guilds, but even there the rue is worn with a difference. The Guilds were very important institutions in their day, ranking in their corporate capacity as the equal of baron or king. They were very intimately associated with the Church, so that men have questioned whether they originated as religious and social organizations, subsequently becoming connected with a particular trade, or whether the process was reversed. Each Guild was placed under the patronage of some saint, on whose festival the annual election of Master and Wardens took place. The eve of the Patronal Festival was the occasion of a service for the souls of departed

members of the Guild; and the day itself commenced with a corporate Mass, and ended with an elaborate love-feast. In secular affairs (to quote Mr. Chesterton) "a Guild was, very broadly speaking, a Trade Union in which every man was his own employer. That is, a man could not work at any trade unless he would join the league and accept the laws of that trade; but he worked in his own shop with his own tools, and the whole profit went to himself. The old Guilds insisted peremptorily upon the same level system of payment and treatment, which is a point of complaint against the modern Trades Unions. But they insisted also, as the Trades Unions cannot do, upon a high standard of craftsmanship, which still astonishes the world in the corners of perishing buildings or the colours of broken glass." In a return to the system of the mediaeval Guilds—a return modified by experience and adapted to the requirements of the twentieth century—some earnest thinkers discern a solution of our modern problems. Their scheme is revolutionary in the sense that it presumes a complete break with the capitalistic and centralized system of our time. It advocates an ethic nobler than ever was taught in the Manchester School. It includes organization by function rather than by district, that is to say, organization not by parliamentary borough, but by art or trade. These Guilds would have complete self-management, with all that results therefrom; so that the President of the Board of Trade, for instance, would not be a Professor, but a merchant, having first-hand knowledge of matters

with which he is called upon to deal. I do not say that William Morris particularly advocated this scheme. His pill to cure our earthquake was Socialism, and the idea of the Guild State has developed since his day. I am not pretending myself to be an obstinate and unregenerate adherent of the cult. But it is undoubtedly an interesting speculation, and a growing cause, and more attention might profitably be given to the Guild State as a possible path leading out of our industrial and economic unrest.

The Church of the Middle Ages was a very powerful and imposing institution—I had almost written the most powerful of institutions. It bulked very large in the eyes of the average citizen of the thirteenth century, and he could no more escape from its influence than from the air he breathed. The Church baptized, and wived, and shrived, and buried him. The Church was his club, his art gallery, and his opera-house. It did not necessarily make him a saint, for saints are few in this faulty planet, We remember Pascal's pregnant phrase that he who aspires to rise to the angel only succeeds in falling to the brute. But it taught him his Credo and Paternoster; it instructed him in Bible story and the legends of the saints; it provided him with the opportunity of living like a decent Christian man. The cult of the Blessed Virgin gave him a respect for Womanhood; and at Mass his God was made known to him in the breaking of bread. Now to this vast panorama of mediaeval life William Morris—so sensitive and delicately responsive in other respects

—was blind and deaf; purblind and stone deaf. In early manhood he seems to have suffered a "secularization of mind" and afterwards, like Gallio, to have cared for none of these things. As a schoolboy he experienced the High Church tradition of Marlborough, and went up to Oxford with the intention of taking Holy Orders. But from the memorable occasion when he decided that his function in life was that of the artist, not that of the priest, he lost interest in religion, and put off with the cassock, all concern with things of the spirit. His interest in cathedrals went no farther than the husk: for the kernel he had lost the taste. When Morris wrote "News from Nowhere," the best use he could find for the churches was to make them serve as refectories for happy villagers on bank holidays and such-like festive occasions. One need not be devout to trust that buildings hallowed by so many tender associations, and another kind of love-feast, may be preserved for a nobler purpose. The subject of this essay being "The Mediaevalism of William Morris," it seemed absolutely necessary to speak shortly of this curious limitation. Had it been concerned with any other aspect of his work it would have been easy, and even agreeable, to have avoided the occasion.

We have now considered—however slightly and inadequately—the mediaevalism of William Morris, in its relation to his poetical, his business, and his political life. We have seen how largely he derived from the Middle Ages in these matters. His poetry was drawn from their clear and limpid springs; the crafts in which he excelled were of their

fashioning; and his politics were the expression of a divine discontent got by simply looking upon their face. The ideal of William Morris, however, is not always the modern ideal. The very definition of Youth is a state of looking forward, and progress for the young may be described as going somewhere at a very great pace. To them the mediaevalist seems to have his eyes set in the back of his head. And yet the lover of the thirteenth century is of their hope and faith, even though they know him not. If you have proceeded too far along a road, the quickest way to arrive at your destination is to turn back, retrace your steps until you come again to the cross-ways, and then take the right path. And should we meet such a person, returning, and casting about for the missed road, let us wish him Good Luck, for his dream of man's Abiding City is as beautiful and true as that of the pilgrim who passes him upon the way.

Pilgrimages, Pious and Otherwise, in the Middle Ages

A REFERENCE to the dictionary discovers the meaning of the word "Pilgrim" to be one who journeys from a distance to seek a holy place. Such pious journeys are an instinct of the human race, for they are common to all religions. The Jew went up from his provincial town to Jerusalem, the Holy City. The Moslem who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca, the birthplace of his Prophet, wears a green turban, is addressed by a distinctive title, and is held in reverence by all of his faith. The very mythology of Greece or Rome had its sacred groves, its holy wells, its habitations and buildings and recognized places, once visibly hallowed by the presence of the god, and sought by his worshippers. And what is common to all religions is naturally shared by the Christian. Any reader of the romance and history of the Middle Ages is familiar with the extent to which pilgrimages entered into the life of the people. A large proportion of the persons who travelled in those far-off days wore the dress and emblems of a pilgrim, and sought one of the shrines abounding in every direction. A pilgrimage then was a journey undertaken at considerable personal inconvenience, in the hopes of obtaining some spiritual or material benefit of which the pilgrim felt the need. The way was full of perils and discomforts—perils of robbers and sordid disomforts,

of which we have an entirely inadequate conception in a century of express trains and lordly hotels. But if the palmer only returned in safety to his home, he had every reason to plume himself on his accomplishment, and had thoughts and memories sufficient to fill the evening of his day. The idea of pilgrimages to holy places has never faded from the Latin mind. Any reader of those famous novels " Lourdes " and " The Triumph of Death " must remember the colossal scale on which they are still organized in France and Italy. Indeed, he is fortunate if he can forget that dirt and hysteria and physical miseries are not peculiar to mediaeval travel, as both Zola and D'Annunzio seem to find a positive pleasure in bringing these ugly features under his eyes and nose. The Anglo-Saxon race, on the other hand, takes little interest in the saints and their shrines ; this, no doubt, because we are largely a Protestant people. England furnishes an insignificant proportion of the international pilgrimage to Lourdes ; Rome attracts a certain number, but here the classical and artistic associations of the city count for much ; and if some few of us follow in the steps of our fathers along what is known as the " Pilgrims' Way," I fear that piety can hardly be imputed to us with any confidence. Our thoughts are occupied more with Canterbury Pilgrims than with memories of the Martyred Bishop, and a singularly delightful rural walk resembles a literary excursion rather than a religious exercise. Excursions to the haunts and homes of our famous dead have taken the place of pilgrimages to the shrines of the saints

amongst English-speaking people. Yet in their fashion these, too, are holy places, and any fitting visitor is, in a sense, a pious pilgrim, even if his piety has its springs in human tenderness rather than in religious aspiration. A visit, for instance, to the scene of Gray's " Elegy " at Stoke Poges is both a delightful experience and a pious pilgrimage. For, somehow or other, the piercing melancholy of the " Elegy in a Country Churchyard," the " Eton College," and the inscription set by him on his mother's tomb (" The careful, tender mother of many children, one of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her ") is transmuted to a very delicate, twilight grief, and we walk back across the fields in the mood described by the moralist, " The world is not so heavy that it may not be endured, nor so valuable that its loss need be regretted." Or, again, it is difficult to estimate precisely how much is " literary excursion " and how much is " pious pilgrimage " in a visit to a spot so rich in literary and saintly associations as the home of holy George Herbert of Bemerton. The humble village church of Bemerton stands beneath the spire of one of the most magnificent cathedrals in England. It is quite rudimentary in its architecture, and would hold at a pinch some fifty persons. Absolutely the only interest attaching to the church is the slab let into the chancel wall, bearing the initials " G. H." and the date 1632, and the knowledge that Herbert is buried immediately before the altar at which he ministered. Six steps across the country lane bring one to the Parsonage, with the quaint

inscription placed above its entrance by the poet himself :

> If thou chance for to find
> A new house to thy mind,
> And built without thy cost ;
> Be good to the poor
> As God gives thee store,
> And then my labour's not lost.

The lines are unimpeachable in sentiment, and delightful with a self-pleasing oddness, and yet, I think, they burn with but a tiny spark of the divine flame. They are characteristic of their author, who, though a charming lyric poet, would not be considered to rank amongst the supreme masters of English song. The verse is not fine enough to distract us from its content, and as we sit in the unassuming church considering this poetry, and the holy life of which it was but the poorest expression, almost more than elsewhere in Protestant England do we feel how nearly a literary excursion can approach a pious pilgrimage.

The mediaeval Christian went on pilgrimage undisturbed by any association with letters, and it is interesting to note the places to which he fared. Naturally enough he voyaged to Palestine, with its haunting memories of the Founder of his faith. The pilgrim pressed, too, the acres trodden by those blessed feet, which nineteen hundred years ago were nailed for our salvation to the bitter cross. He visited Bethlehem, the scene of the autumn idyll of Ruth and Boaz, and of that Manger Story so inextricably woven with our Christmastide memories. He entered Jerusalem,

boldly identifying every sacred place, but with a special devotion to the Holy Sepulchre. Sometimes the palmer went on pilgrimage to expiate a great sin, practically alone, and at the imminent risk of his life, for Palestine then was in the hands of the Saracen. Fulk, the founder of our Plantagenet kings, went much in this fashion. His race boasted their descent from the Devil, and there seems some truth in the brag. This engaging prince burnt his wife alive, assisting at the entertainment dressed in his finest clothes. He forced his son to crawl to his feet, saddled and bridled, and set his boot upon the young man's neck. To atone for these, and kindred enormities, Fulk journeyed to Jerusalem. He caused himself to be dragged through the streets by a halter, and scourged on the bare shoulders, filling the city with his cries. Let us hope his penance was accepted. Many of us absolve ourselves from our sins with far less pain. But more generally the pilgrim went East in an organized body, as member of a Crusade, trusting to take Jerusalem by force from the Infidel. The great spiritual adventure of the Crusades haunted the mind and conscience of the Middle Ages. For centuries the Arab invasion had beaten on the walls of Europe, and to the sensitive soul it was intolerable that the holy places of Christendom should be in the power of aliens in blood and religion. To effect their redemption was one supreme aim of mediaevalism. Crusade after crusade was preached by enthusiasts like Peter the Hermit, or by saints like Bernard of Clairvaux. Crusade after crusade

was launched by kings such as Richard the Lion Hearted, and by St. Louis the Ninth of France. The very children organized an effort when their fathers failed. They perished tragically by thousands on the way, or were sold in the bazaar as slaves to Islam masters in Egypt. The wresting of the Holy Land from Mahomet was the root idea of the Middle Ages. Seven crusades were undertaken to effect the purpose; blood and treasure were poured out; and in spite of the immense effort of Christendom the divine adventure failed. Jerusalem was lost to the Christians in 1244. Not until 1918 (some 700 years later), when it fell to a mixed force of French, British, and Indian troops, did Jerusalem slip once more from the Moslem grasp.

The influence of the Crusades upon western civilization must have been enormous. This mighty concourse of armed pilgrims passed from the narrow lanes of a mediaeval city, and from the crowded castle defending it, to a softer and a more refined civilization than their own. They marvelled at the wealth and luxury of Constantinople, and compared the Emperor's Court with the sooty, rush-strewn halls of home. The East rushed upon them with its enchantments, and their romances are full of their amazement. The hero of such stories "plunders palaces with magnificent chambers and halls hung with cloth of gold, furnished with seats of ivory, vessels of gold, beds rich with coverings, curtains, and pillows of wondrous beauty, and with softest carpets on the floor. Arab steeds of the finest

breed, with saddles, harness, and bridles, fall to his sword; Arab slaves in the costume of the East are made to wait upon his will; Arab women minister to his pleasure." The climate of the East was enervating, morally as well as physically. Enthusiasm died down; the fine gold became tarnished; so that the very Preacher of the Crusade, St. Bernard, had to remind his hearers that to overcome their passions was better than to conquer Jerusalem; and Pope and Council to insist that the Infidel must be convinced of sin by reason rather than by violence; and that Jew and Saracen should not be despised, because they, too, bear in them the Image of a common Father.

The pilgrim also journeyed to Rome, to the Chair of him who sat in the seat of the Apostles, and was the visible head of the Church. He knelt at the confession of St. Peter and St. Paul; he visited the narrow, underground passages of the Catacombs, candle in hand; and paid his devotions to the relics and memorials of martyrs in which Rome, beyond all other cities, is rich. With what passion of reverence he sated his great curiosity we can easily imagine. Generally he was an ordinary pilgrim enough, but occasionally he was a Tannhauser, guilty of some dread sin neither bishop nor priest could absolve, but which must be dealt with by the Pope alone. Such visits to the Eternal City had a far-reaching, and, indeed, almost incalculable, effect upon the thought and conscience of the Middle Ages. Associations and antiquities alike made Rome the

true University of the world. When London was but a squalid group of huts on the high ground above the mud flats of the Thames, when Paris was but the refuge of a tribe of fishing folk on the islets of the Seine; Rome was a city of marble, with a religion, and traditions, and a history. Men remembered that in old days Rome had stood for law, authority, order—and had imposed her peace upon a distracted world. The thinkers of the Middle Ages looked about upon their own confused and disturbed conditions—city warring with city, petty tyrant with petty tyrant—and cherished a noble dream that the Holy Roman Empire might be restored—that just as the Pope was the central authority and representative man in spiritual concerns, so an emperor might be established as overlord far above duke and prince, or even kings, to be the final court of appeal and arbitrament in temporal affairs. As the wresting of Palestine from the grip of the Infidel was one supreme ideal of mediaevalism, so the restoration of the Holy Roman Empire was its other cherished dream—and like so many dreams and ideals in this faulty world, both conceptions were doomed to remain unrealized.

Palestine and Rome, however, were a great distance off—much farther away in the thirteenth century than in the twentieth. It was extremely inconvenient, and, indeed, quite impossible, for many piously disposed persons to undertake so fatiguing a journey. It mattered the less, because every country in Christendom possessed holy places and shrines to which the faithful made

pilgrimage. The German fared to Cologne, where were preserved the relics of the Three Kings who came to the Child and His Mother bearing gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. The Spaniard went to Compostella in reverence of St. James; the Frenchman to Tours to venerate the body of St. Martin, the soldier saint and apostle of his people. The Englishman went to the tomb of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury, or to Glastonbury. Glastonbury, in Somerset, was a famous resort of pilgrims, and rightly so, for the legends attaching to the spot make it one of the most entrancing of Abbeys. The memories of Glastonbury are deeply rooted in the religion, the poetry, and the very origins of our race. Tradition told how Joseph of Arimathea set sail from Palestine as a missionary, and landing in England established himself in that rich and fertile meadow-land of the West known as Avalon. Here he planted his staff in token of seisin, and even yet on Christmas Day the thorn magically blossoms as the rose. St. Joseph brought with him a sacred treasure. It was the chalice used at the Last Supper, which served also as a vessel to collect the gouts of blood as they fell from Christ's pierced side upon the Cross. The Grail disappeared from its shrine, but readers of Malory will remember the quest of King Arthur's knights to accomplish the mystic vision. They will recall also how the wounded king was carried to Avalon for the searching of his hurts, there to abide, as in a covert, till Arthur should come again.

I have mentioned but a few of the more

important pilgrim centres; but there was no lack of places to choose from. Englishmen travelled to Durham to visit the tomb of St. Cuthbert; they honoured St. Edward the Confessor in his own Abbey of Westminster; the first English martyr, Alban, in the church called yet after his name; the Saxon king slain by the pagan Danes, and laid to rest at Bury St. Edmund's. Above all, the pilgrims flocked to Walsingham and Canterbury, for no shrines could vie with these in popularity. The former was devoted to the cult of the Blessed Virgin; the latter to the veneration of the murdered Bishop. But so great was the press of saints and witnesses that shrines abounded in every direction. There were seventy such in Norfolk alone.

The mediaeval pilgrim undertook his long and painful journey for many conflicting reasons. At the highest he sought a particular shrine because of the pious memories hallowing the spot, or because a saint's body was buried there. He hoped, as a consequence, to obtain for himself, or for others, some material or spiritual good of which he felt the need. Since palmers and pilgrims were very numerous, it followed that a great relic—the head or member of a saint, for instance—was a big commercial asset to the town which was lucky enough to possess it. Just as we were taught yesterday that business follows the flag, so in the thirteenth century business went after the relic. A local trade sprang up in all the important centres of pilgrimage. Symbols of the saint, memorials of your visit, were sold in the booths. Amusements abounded, even more than

grace. Inns and innkeepers flourished; competition was so pronounced that laws were passed to prevent vintners dragging the distracted visitor one from another. If a holy man lay dying in a town, the citizens rejoiced greatly at their good fortune. They put guards at their gates, so that the poor, warm body should not be smuggled out for the benefit of a rival borough that might consider it had a prior claim. Every district was properly boastful of the merits of its own particular saint, precisely as each country is rightly boastful of the beauty of its women. St. Martin was the Evangelist of France; but more especially he belonged to Tours. Auxerre also had its own peculiar saint, St. Germain. When Hastings, the northern pirate, rowed up the Loire, Martin's body —the glory of Tours—was hastily taken to Auxerre for safety, where its presence was marked by many miracles. The citizens of Auxerre, jealous for the honour of their local Patron, declared it was St. Germain who worked these wonders. The two conflicting parties decided to put the matter to the proof, and a paralytic was chosen for the test. He was carefully placed between the bodies of the two saints, but whilst the half of his person near St. Martin became vigorous with lusty life, the half next St. Germain remained in the same doleful plight as before. The champions of St. Martin declared naturally that this marvel proved their contention. But the devotees of St. Germain answered, No; their Patron was ever famous for courtesy; and in this he had only played the host to his guest, the good

St. Martin. Here, if need be, was another proof of his superior sanctity.

A pilgrimage was undertaken from other motives than for spiritual edification. It provided a convenient excuse for keeping out of the way when a man was in monetary difficulties, and his creditors inconveniently pressing. It was a form of political protest used against the king when a popular captive was executed; and that the prisoner was excommunicate did not necessarily affect the devotion. It afforded a pleasant change from the humdrum round of every day. Life in the Middle Ages was monotonous for rich and poor alike, but more particularly for the poor. Amusements were few and limited; theatres—except for an occasional Mystery Play—non-existent; books were appalling in price, and what was the use of a book (except painted books) if you could not read? People worked hard, they played hard, they got as much fun out of Church as possible, making it drama, opera, and club house in one, and they had an insatiable appetite for merry tales—but it was very dull and monotonous, at times, even in Merry England, so they took to the road. They adventured in such numbers that laws were framed to stop them going. Men had to get a sort of licence before they might leave their homes. It was not that people had no holidays in mediaeval times; on the contrary, they had plenty of holidays—Church holydays—but few chances of a week or two right off. There were doubtless discomforts in plenty on a pilgrimage—indeed, we shall speak of them later—

and so there are in our holidays of to-day. You overwalk yourself; you get wet through; you are horribly seasick; you are dog tired; but you enjoy it all the same, and you boast of your experiences afterwards. Mediaeval preachers complain that pilgrims return fatter than they went, and talk so much in church about what they have seen that the congregation cannot listen either to Mass or to sermon. When the women of Marseilles for devotion's sake visited the Magdalen's cave, some five miles from their city, we are told by the chronicler that they brought with them asses laden with bread and wine and pasties and fish, and such other meats as they desired. In short, it was a regular picnic. As a fact, mediaeval preachers largely discouraged pilgrimages, and for excellent reasons. They disapproved of the slack attendance at Mass on the journey, of the songs that were sung, and of the dances in the churchyards on the quiet hillocks of the dead. These preachers but repeated, in gentler terms, what had already been stressed of the moral disasters consequent to many pilgrimages. In the seventh century, Wilfrid, the famous Bishop of York, goes so far as to say that of those who travelled to Rome few remained sound, and that there were few cities of Lombardy where there was not a wanton of English birth.

A traveller of the Middle Ages setting out on pilgrimage for some distant or foreign town might or might not be edified, but was certain of both entertainment and discomfort. To visit a local shrine he could go dressed in his best, or barefoot

and naked to the shirt, if his penance so demanded. But a journey oversea was a more arduous business, and for that he equipped himself with suitable clothing, a stout staff, iron-pointed, and a bag or wallet, called a "scrip." If several companions travelled together their impedimenta included the bagpipes. They carried with them a certain amount of ready money for food and lodging, and to defray the cost of transport from Dover to Boulogne. At night they slept in an inn, packed in dormitories, fitted with berths like a ship's cabin. On some roads—the Pilgrims' Way to Canterbury, for example—chapels were built to afford shelter and sustenance to the wayfarer. Monasteries also took them in, for the sacred duty of Hospitality is a monastic privilege. Even to-day a Benedictine monastery receives you gladly. You think that your shining merits, unapparent, for so long, to the purblind world, have at last been recognized, but, as a fact, the courtesy offered so peculiarly to yourself is extended by the Benedictine rule to all. To the monk the guest is but a symbol of Christ, and in showing hospitality to the stranger he is entertaining his Master unawares. With the day and the resumed journey the pilgrims' adventures are continued. If alone he was in peril of robbers, for in field and byway lurked sturdy vagabonds and masterless men on the watch for such as he. The lonely traveller would be well advised not to accept food, and more especially drink, from the casual acquaintance encountered on his path. These ribalds were wont to add a little powder to the

soup, or the wheaten cake, or the ale of the unwary pilgrim, so that he fell asleep by the way, and was easily robbed of the silver in his pouch. But on the main road this danger was minimized, and the pilgrim would proceed in peace, considering himself in perfect security. He was mistaken. This is the sort of thing that befell him on the high-road in those early times. There was once an Aylesbury miller whose mill needed repair. He wanted clay, so he sent a couple of labourers to dig this clay for him from the public highway. They worked with zeal, and dug a great pit in the middle of the road ten feet long, eight feet wide, and eight feet deep, and went home quite cheerfully with the clay, considering they had done a good day's work. Nobody interfered with them, or even criticized their proceedings. Now this was just before Christmas, and this large pit was quickly filled by the winter's rains. An unlucky glover, making his way in the dusk from the town to a fair, his horse laden with panniers full of gloves, promptly tumbled into this pond, and man and horse alike were drowned. The miller was charged with causing the glover's death, but was acquitted by the Court, on the ground that he was actuated by no malicious intent, but had only dug the hole to repair his mill. Byway and highway were both full of snares and pitfalls for the mediaeval pilgrim.

However, all peril and discomfort were forgotten in the entertainment afforded by the road. Consider the novelty of the spectacle offered to the eyes of one, who, perhaps, had never before been a dozen miles from his native hamlet. Knights

rode by in mail upon their mighty destriers. A high ecclesiastic passed on his way to France. In his train were eight splendid chariots, each drawn by five horses, no less strong and furnished than the knight's destrier. Each horse had a sturdy young man to lead him, clad in a new coat ; moreover each chariot had its own driver and guardian. A criminal might be met, fleeing for sanctuary ; or a banished man, hastening to the nearest port, carrying a wooden cross in his hand, whilst near him scowled the avenger, with drawn knife, which he might legally use should the holy symbol for one short moment leave the wretch's grasp. There was the leper, with his cup and clapper ; the devil-may-care student tramping from school to school—Padua, Oxford, Paris ; the minstrel with his troupe of dancing girls or, better still, with a bear. Or the pilgrim just commencing his journey might come face to face with the pilgrim returning from oversea, and would listen, open-eyed and open-mouthed, to his narrative. It is not surprising that pilgrims were popularly considered to draw the long bow with the dexterity of Robin Hood. A pilgrim's story is the mediaeval equivalent of the fisherman's yarn of to-day. In " Piers Plowman," Langland paints a picture of such a pilgrim just arrived home with bowl and scrip. He wears a hundred phials in his hat, shells, crosses, keys of Rome, the symbols of his pilgrimage. He tells that he has come from Sinai, the Holy Sepulchre, Bethlehem, and Babylon, as the signs he carries testify. But when this seeker of shrines is questioned, " Knowest thou at all a

saint whom men call Truth ? Canst thou show us the way to the place where he dwelleth ? " " Nay, so help me God," he replies, " I never before now heard palmer with staff and scrip ask after him." Pilgrims' stories, fishermen's yarns—these always were the jest of those not addicted to such pursuits.

Supposing the pilgrim to have escaped the various dangers incident to the road, there yet remained the more dreadful perils of the sea. I do not particularly refer to storms, though these were serious and terrifying enough to frail little cockle-boats carrying some hundred passengers huddled together in every extremity of discomfort. The Channel crossing was a perilous business then, even though you travelled with the luxury of a king. Listen to the old chronicler : " As the King sailed toward England on the high sea, the most mishaps, storms and tempests, thunders and lightnings fell to him in the sea, the which was said that it was done and aroused through evil spirits made by sorcery and necromancy of them of France. Therefore the King's heart was full of sorrow and anguish, wailing and sighing, and said unto our Lady in this wise, ' Oh, blessed Lady, St. Mary, what is the cause that evermore, going into France, all things and weathers fall to me joyful and liking and gladsome, and as I would have them, but always, turning Englandward, all things fall unprofitable and harmful ? ' Nevertheless, escaping all the perils of the sea, he, as God would, came by night to the Tower of London." Nor do I especially refer to sea-sickness, though this was far from a joke, for the passage lasted a long

time, and not every voyager was a king with a special attendant to hold his head. There is an early poem, entitled " The Pilgrims' Sea Voyage," which describes with painful realism this little misery of travel. Men must not think to laugh and play (says the poet) when they seek the shrine of St. James, for their hearts fail them as soon as they put out to sea. The captain prophesies that some of the pilgrims are like to cough and groan long before midnight. Facetious sailors shout in their ears, " Be merry, we shall soon get a squall or a storm." Meanwhile they lie about the deck, bowls at their sides, crying for hot malmsey to quiet their queasy stomachs. They cannot eat ; their heads ache like to split in three ; they open their prayer books on their knee, and try to read till they cannot look out of their eyes. The lucky ones have straw beds, but many lie on wood, wrapped in their cloaks, without mattress or supper. As for others, their place is near the ship's pump, and they were better dead than smelling the stinking bilge. In truth, the travellers were very unhappy, and, as the poet says, little inclined to laughter and to play.

The mediaeval traveller regarded the sea with distrust, as did the Greek before him. In his eyes it was a treacherous and unaccountable element, of which he was the helpless sport. He went further, and included all those who did their business in deep waters in a common condemnation. The seamen of the Middle Ages bore a thoroughly bad reputation. They deserved it, and lived down to it. The peaceful citizen was haunted by the

memory that most of the evils his fathers endured came with the ships from oversea. In earlier ages the Vikings sailed the swan's path, harrying and wasting the wretched lands on which they beached their long boats. The mediaeval sailor emulated the misdeeds of his predecessors, the Norwegian pirates. Indeed, he was little better than a pirate himself. Chaucer, describing the shipman from Dartmouth, whom he introduces into the "Canterbury Tales," humorously remarks :

> If that he fought, and had the higher hand,
> By water he sent them home to every land.

meaning to say that he drowned all his prisoners.

In the time of King John a law was enacted banishing Jews from England. A party of such Jews took passage in a ship, and paid the captain to carry them from the country. The captain, having received his fee, sailed with his confiding passengers to the Goodwins, where he ridded himself of further trouble by dumping them on the quicksands. Apparently neither he, nor his crew, was afflicted with a sensitive conscience. We need not be surprised at the way these shipmen dealt with the Jews, since they behaved equally badly to their fellow-Christians. They were known to starve their passengers to death ; they marooned pilgrims on lonely islands ; they sold them as slaves to the Saracens. Some sailors once hired a galley, on condition that if it perished at sea they were to pay nothing to the owners. They then filled her with pilgrims bound for Acre, and commenced the voyage. When they were yet some

short distance from their destination the crew packed the ship's boats with the pilgrims' goods, bored holes in the bottom of the vessel, and pushed off, leaving their helpless victims to drown. The sailors rowed ashore, with long faces, and declined to pay for the hire of the ship, under the pretext that it was wrecked at sea. No doubt they described its loss as the act of God. These gentry were only kept in order by the most horrid punishments. For theft, for instance (private, not collective theft), the culprit's hair was cut close, boiling pitch was poured over his head, the feathers out of a bed were shaken over him, and at the first spot where the ship touched land, he was cast forth. It was imperative that there should be honour amongst thieves. If he slept on his watch the look-out was keelhauled. If a shipman drew knife on his fellow, the weapon was struck through the offender's hand to the mast, so that if he wished to go free he had to pull the dagger out himself. Did the sailor kill his comrade he was buried alive with the corpse. I do not know that all this quite suggests a pleasant change. It sounds rather gruesome. But should the pilgrim, enduring dangers and hardships such as have been described, arrive safely at his destination, a rich reward was his. The fitting pilgrim would kneel upon the sacred spot, or gaze upon the holy relic, he had pained himself so greatly to visit. Faith, undoubtedly, would in many cases ensure the granting of his desire. Should the temporal blessing he urged be denied, we must remember—in George Meredith's phrase—that he

who rises from his knees a better man his prayer is answered. He would experience the fruitful and abiding graces of fervour, consolation, and peace, and after the long travail of the way, the soul of any such pilgrim would be satisfied.

Not every pilgrim was fitted to receive consolations such as these, and I have stressed the view that many went on pilgrimage in a bank holiday mood, rather than in a sober spirit of devotion. Possibly, indeed, I have underlined this truth rather too heavily. But it happens that a master of English literature wrote a famous poem, entitled "Canterbury Tales," dealing with a pilgrimage to Thomas à Becket's shrine, and the Prologue to that immortal narrative supports my contention to the full. Chaucer was born in the fourteenth century, and died in October, 1400, aged sixty years. The circumstances of his life, and his character, permitted him to touch the interests of his era at vital points, and to move, an unobtrusive observer, amongst all classes of society. A Cockney, born and bred, he appears, in an unexplained fashion, as a page at Court, and saw some active service, with the worst of luck, in France. On his return he received an appointment as squire to the King. An odd combination of student and man of affairs, he was next employed on political missions to France and Italy. A busy, practical man, he became Comptroller of the Customs of the Port of London, and Clerk of the Works, with a seat in Parliament. Later in life he fell into deep disgrace, having to seek protection against various monetary suits at law. At

the very last there was a brief aftermath of prosperity, his pension was doubled, and in 1399 he took a lease for fifty-three years of a house in the garden of St. Mary's Chapel, Westminster, where a few months later he died. Chaucer was buried in Westminster Abbey, and owes that distinction to his status as a parishioner, rather than to his glory as a poet, or his standing as a courtier.

For the last thirteen years of his life Chaucer was occupied about the creation of a group of characters, who should proceed from the Tabard Inn at Southwark to the shrine of Becket at Canterbury, and with the composition of narratives intended to beguile any tedium of the road. The pilgrimage to Canterbury was the most popular " outing " in England. The events which led to the Archbishop's canonization will need but brief summary here. Becket's father, Gilbert, was a prominent citizen of London. Romantic stories were current later that his mother was a Saracen princess, who assisted Gilbert to escape from captivity, and subsequently followed her lover to England, having but two words of English —Gilbert and London—to help her on her way. Thomas Becket's abilities and qualities attracted the attention of King Henry the Second. This able and unscrupulous monarch was utterly empty of religion. He never confessed or communicated, and eased the boredom of attendance at Mass by turning over the pages of picture-books. Becket was young and gay and showy, and the two men became fast friends. The King first made his

friend Chancellor ; then to assist him in his purposes against the Church proposed to procure his consecration as Archbishop of Canterbury. Becket refused the dignity, warning Henry that should he persist in his plan, he would soon come to hate as much as he then loved him. Despite this protest Becket was consecrated archbishop, and from that tragic moment hatred grew between them, because of their conflicting and irreconcilable views on Church policy. The division culminated in the King's cry of, "Will no one rid me of this insolent priest?" and in Becket's murder by four knights in the crypt of his own cathedral. England, and indeed Christendom, were profoundly moved by the cowardly crime. Miracles were wrought at the martyr's tomb ; a tragic fate dogged each of his murderers ; the Church canonized her servant, and he became the most popular saint in England, and his shrine the richest. Even the King was appalled. To prevent excommunication he bowed to the storm, and did public penance at Canterbury. And every year an innumerable company of pilgrims did honour to the victim of the King's hasty and passionate words, and deliberate policy.

Now many years after the murder Chaucer built up his masterpiece around this pilgrimage. Chaucer was a great dramatist, a master of character, and the Prologue to the "Canterbury Tales" is of supreme social significance. The most Shakespearean of poets in the breadth of his humanity, Chaucer resembled Shakespeare also in this, that he held the mirror as it were to Nature. He

reproduced the whole range of the life he saw about him with startling exactness, and in the Introduction to his "Canterbury Tales," the chivalry, the ecclesiastics, the professional classes, and the working classes of the fourteenth century, appear in their habit as they lived, five hundred years after his death. We see the very perfect gentle knight, meek as a maid, in his soiled cassock and worn mail, the hero of fifteen mortal battles against Mahomet's heathenry; the squire, gay as a mead, singing and fluting all the day, "steeped to the lips in romance, seeing everything in the purple light of love"; the yeoman, in coat and hood of green, a sheaf of peacock arrows beneath his belt, and his mighty bow in hand. A group of churchmen permits us to mark Chaucer's sympathy with the reforming temper of Wyclif—the ignorant monk who rides with jingling bridle to hounds, a degenerate son of that Benedict who rolled in thorns to subdue the flesh; the begging friar packed like a pedlar, of that order of Franciscans whose founder died blinded with weeping for the sins of the great indifferent world; the dainty prioress with her sentimental brooch; above all, that poor parson and faithful parish priest, who would rather forgo his tithe than curse his parishioners for the debt. The professional classes are represented by the doctor of physic, rich with the profits of the Black Death, and the serjeant of law that ever seemed busier than he was. Lastly came the representatives of labour, the shipman, the cook (afflicted, like Lazarus, with sores), the weaver, the miller with his bagpipes, and that

ploughman who was the poor parson's brother in spirit as well as by birth.

Now I do not think that out of the thirty persons who started from the Tabard Inn that April morning on the road to Canterbury, more than half a dozen or so, beyond doubt or question, were fitting pilgrims. The knight, the parson, the clerk of Oxenford, the ploughman—these, and one or two others, certainly had not mistaken their vocation. The outward sign they bore was truly the token of an inward and spiritual grace. But for the others, the main note of their journey is that of a pleasant change, rather than a pious pilgrimage. The note is not particularly devout or edifying. The talk is not a peculiarly heavenly conversation. Certain characters, such, for example, as "that fair but not bashful pilgrim," the Wife of Bath, do not seem exactly religious. Quite frankly fair and shrine are pastimes to her, the one as spiritually profitable as the other. The stories told on the journey are not such as we should expect to hear from persons absorbed in "making their soul." The miller's tale is apologized for explicitly on the ground that that worthy was drunk. Indeed, it is his only possible excuse. Perchance, too, the cook was on his way to Canterbury to find healing for his physical sores, for the souvenir of the shrine was a little flask with the words stamped on the pewter, "For good people that are sick, Thomas is the best of physicians." No, for the majority of these Canterbury pilgrims—drawn from the life and with intimate knowledge—spring was in the air, April

was in the blood, and they took the road in quite the modern bank holiday spirit, for a little excitement, and a pleasant break in the monotony of every day.

I suggest we must recall another famous pilgrim book if we would realize the great gulf fixed between a pleasant outing and a pious pilgrimage. Some three hundred years after the composition of Chaucer's sunny Prologue, a tinker in Bedford Jail wrote another immortal " Pilgrim's Progress." In the course of his twelve years' imprisonment, Bunyan indited the Puritan prose epic dealing with the flight of Christian from the City of Destruction to the Heavenly Jerusalem. Think of the grim earnestness displayed by Christian upon his pilgrimage, from the moment he was conscious of the pack on his back, till all the trumpets sound as he crosses the river. Remember the edifying conversation of Christian and Hopeful upon their way. Why, even Mr. Talkative of Prating Row speaks more like a pilgrim than most of the jaunters in the " Canterbury Tales " ! We may love one book above the other ; this more than that ; personally I would not sacrifice the " Canterbury Tales " for a dozen " Pilgrim's Progresses " ; but I know in my heart which book contains the record of a pleasant outing, and which the history of a pious pilgrimage.

Looking Before and After (Victorian and Georgian)

IT is necessary for the purpose of this paper to arrive—at the outset—at some working definition of "Youth" and "Age." It is not an easy matter to determine precisely when one passes the frontier between the two states. The frontier has an odd knack of receding as our years advance. Neither are youth and age mere matters of appearance or mood, as suggested by the proverb which tells us that a woman is as old as she looks, and a man as young as he feels. This is an adage so unfair, as obviously to have been invented by one sex to the disadvantage of the other. It is old—to senility; it is unfair, because it must lead inevitably to a distressing conflict of opinion. I think it possible to ascertain one's relation to youth and age in a more excellent fashion than this. Age or youth is not altogether a thing of years, or moods, or appearances. It is in some respects a matter of habit, and habit, in the long run, is character. Let each ask himself, for instance, a simple question as to whether he lives the more willingly in the past or in the future; whether he looks forward the more gladly, or back the more fondly. His honest reply will not prove that looking before is better than looking after, or vice versa, but undoubtedly it will give him the assurance of either youth or eld. If he anticipates with eagerness the years to come, then he is young,

even though he be greyheaded. Does he hoard in his heart some golden store of secret memories, then he is old, though he be clear-eyed as a child. There is a legend which tells, that " when our first parents were driven from Paradise, God—always tempering judgment with mercy—made dim within their minds the memory of that blissful place, and when sons and daughters were born to them, these were content with their heritage, not knowing their loss, and Eve was content in their contentment. But after many years of a mother's joys and sorrows, Eve gave birth to a child unlike the others, and her heart was troubled. For this child would listen with rapt face to strains of divine music uncaught by Eve's ear now, and in his eyes she saw waving branches that she remembered to be shadows of the long-forgotten trees of Eden." Which of these two—the child and the woman—was the older? The mother looked forward gladly; she lived in bright anticipation the life of her every son. She was young with the freshness of their youth. But as to the infant on her knee, " the past rose up out of the dark before him, spread like a picture before his eyes, and breathed like a tale into his ear." His life might be reckoned only by weeks or months, but he was coeval with all the age and losses of the world. He was old.

Do not let us delude ourselves with the fancy that we live in the present. Children may; and occasionally such a child of genius as Charles Lamb can deceive himself with the illusion that he is content to remain middle-aged—neither young nor old, neither cold nor hot, only lukewarm—through-

out eternity. Ours, however, is the common heritage of our race. We live in yesterday or to-morrow, but seldom in to-day. Paradise is either in the past or in the future, never here and now. We look before and after. By the street of to-day man passes to the house of to-morrow. And in this connexion it does not follow necessarily that the vision of youth is finer than the memories of age, or that every to-morrow is a step nearer to the Pit. The Golden Age may prove to have been at the beginning of things in Eden, as the ancient legend tells, or, possibly, may be that far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves. For our immediate purpose it signifies nothing. What concerns us now is that habit of mind which I have called "youth" or "age"—that temper which, on the one hand, looks before with eager curiosity, ever wondering what may be hidden round the sharp bend of the road, or else looks after at the Delectable Mountains left behind in the long day's march. It is not a question of years. It is temperament, or character, or habit—possibly conviction. We look before or after, largely because I am I, and you are you.

The point of view could be illustrated in several directions, but more especially perhaps from two paths whereon I fear to tread. The contrast of youth and age is very noticeable in the choice made between the loyalties of the past on the one side and the great new hopes inspired by the rise of democracy on the other; between the ancient dogmatic religion enshrined in creeds and the nebulous God dimly descried by Mr. Wells on some

far-off horizon. But it is unfortunate that the two subjects of politics and religion—which in a sense are the only matters worth consideration—should not prove grateful of discussion in a literary essay. We cannot therefore discuss politics and religion here, and if we try to talk them over in private we shall very probably lose our dearest friend. These themes are indeed double-edged. However, the test can be applied through a subject germane to our present purpose—I mean Literature. I propose to consider Literature quite simply from the respective standpoints of " Youth " and " Age "—Youth and Age as defined already in this paper—and, since I would always deal rather with the concrete instance than with some abstract theory, I suggest that the discussion be limited to two phases of literature of which all of my readers are likely to have first-hand knowledge, and that we concern ourselves with some contrasts in Victorian and Georgian Literature. Only it cannot be promised that with the best will in the world our two taboos can be respected. They are irrepressible, and, like cheerfulness in the mind of the would-be philosopher, will keep breaking in.

The Victorian era counted from 1837 to 1900—roughly speaking some sixty odd years. It is impossible, however, to establish an exact boundary line defining with mathematical precision when the Victorian era commences and where it ends. We cannot affirm that it began when Victoria was crowned, for Wordsworth was the bright particular star of that firmament, and Wordsworth,

certainly, was not a Victorian. It cannot be held to shut abruptly like a told tale in 1900, for by the kindness of the gods Mr. Hardy is still amongst us, and yet on active service. Moreover, certain poets, rightly claimed as of the Georgian School, were living, and not exactly juvenile either, at that date. Their inclusion in that most excellent anthology, "The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse," on a mere certificate of birth, seems to me a mistake. In the question of the confines of the Victorian era dates must be interpreted generously, according to a spirit which it is very easy to perceive, if not quite easy to define.

These sixty years produced a very remarkable body of writers and of books, worthy in every respect to succeed the golden periods of our past. The Victorian poet might speak hastily of "this ghastly thin-faced time of ours," but he himself was a standing disproof of his petulance. I do not suggest that the reign of Victoria can compare with that of Elizabeth, were it only for the crested and prevailing name of Shakespeare. I should not dream myself of pitting the Victorian School against the generation immediately preceding. The Lake School and the Romantics are greater by far than the smaller poets who have since put on their singing robes. But I do suggest that the Victorian era bears comparison with the Augustan age, for if the former produced no novelist so masculine as Fielding, no historian so majestic as Gibbon, no letter writers to rival the lost—the characteristic—art of the eighteenth century, yet the song of the Augustan poets sounds formal and

neat and timid when heard against the rich fullness of the Victorian note.

Is the claim too high? I think not. Let us take a dozen names representative of Victorian literature, remembering, as we do, the value and significance of their work. In compiling such a list we might include Carlyle and Macaulay as historians; Newman and Ruskin as writers on ethics; Thackeray and Dickens as the two pre-eminent novelists; and Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Rossetti, Morris, and Swinburne as the poets of their era. Now this is a very strong hand—all trumps; but such is the bewildering beauty and variety of the Victorian garden that if the readers of this paper were asked to suggest a list of twelve outstanding writers from 1837 to 1900 I have no doubt whatever that those lists would vary in the most surprising fashion. Certainly they would differ from mine. And when I recall the riches of that work, the distinction of the thought and the brilliance of the expression, I take shame to myself for the modesty of my praise, and, like Clive before the wealth of India, am astonished at my own moderation.

I am painfully aware that, judged by my own theory of "youth" and "age," I date myself quite hopelessly, but it cannot be helped, and I am concerned really about a much more serious matter. The twin taboos of politics and religion rise before me like uneasy spirits, refusing to be laid. The reign of Victoria was a period of social unrest, of noisy debate, of dust, and of battle-cries. Revealed religion and scientific doubt advanced to

the grapple ; rival theories of art were discussed with so shrill a vehemence that the law was brought in to adjudicate between the rival apostles of sweetness and light ; the two ancient political parties continued their secular quarrel, whilst—and until—Democracy grew up. The Victorian writers were children of their time, and occupied about the business of their time. It was very natural and proper that they should be concerned with the dreams and illusions of their generation. There is scarcely one of my twelve writers who was not a hot-gospeller for some cause or another. Macaulay, for instance, was in life a convinced Whig. He wrote, therefore, an admirable History, in a remarkably glittering style, to prove that his political creed was at all times and in all places the true and only gospel. It may be so. After all, Macaulay only did as Dr. Johnson before him, when, as press reporter of Parliamentary debates, that stout old Tory took care not to let the Whig dogs have the best of the argument. Newman, on the other hand, was interested chiefly in religion, and the Odyssey of his soul. These are not subjects about which the average Englishman feels any particular enthusiasm. There are many mundane matters which arouse livelier emotions. It is difficult to persuade him that books on such subjects may be of the utmost importance, or can be written in the most pellucid and persuasive English, with the most rollicking humour and piercing pathos. The Cardinal's difficulties are not his difficulties ; the Cardinal's solutions are very far from being his solutions ; and he is only too

willing to pass by on the other side. The fact is that without sympathy—sympathy either inherent or painfully acquired—we cannot hope to appreciate any work of art, or any personality whatever, outside ourselves. Want of sympathy is the explanation of the amazing judgments passed by the great upon their fellows. When Carlyle declared that Newman had not the brains of a moderate-sized rabbit, he was really not expressing his conviction of the physiological state of a contemporary about the working of whose intellect half England was exercised ; he was merely saying in vivid and picturesque simile that he felt no interest either in Newman, or in Newman's point of view. Want of sympathy is the critic's cardinal sin. Let us, then, examine one or two phases of this Victorian literature, in that spirit of charity which is the bond of peace and of all virtues. To induce such a laudable frame of mind we will avoid both politics and religion.

The two supreme novelists of the Victorian era are Dickens and Thackeray. They are the outstanding masters of an art which is the characteristic art of the nineteenth century. They were born almost in the same year, produced masterpieces side by side, and were looked upon as rivals by a public pampered by their genius. Their gifts, like their education and early circumstances, were very dissimilar. These were indeed so opposite that, as in the case of Newman and Ruskin, you do not always find admirers equally enthusiastic as to both. My own experience is that lovers of Dickens naturally gravitate to

Ruskin; whilst Thackeray and Newman are bound in the bonds of like to like. Dickens was by far the more fortunate in the suffrages of the public, and few things are more pathetic to my mind than the story of Thackeray's little daughter asking her father why he did not write Christmas stories like Mr. Dickens. Thackeray was outstripped in public favour because he did not take his make-belief quite seriously; because he knew his characters to be puppets, not flesh and blood, and was for ever handling them with an almost indecent familiarity. In moments of exasperation we may be tempted of the devil to call him an amateur; but even if this—at times—be true, at least he is always an amateur of genius. Now Dickens has been called many things both good and bad, but nobody yet has dubbed him an amateur; for quite clearly, he was an extremely conscientious artist. Whatever his hand found to do he did it with his might, and if he errs at all it is from an excess of zeal. His books are populous as a city—a city the buildings of which are carved over with fantastic gargoyles. The characters thronging those streets suffer even from the immoderation of their creator, and, at times, are less men and women than "embodied tendencies" strayed from some mediaeval masque of the Seven Deadly Sins. Their laughter and their tears are alike Gargantuan; and the very words seem underlined, and written in red ink. Now, Thackeray, on the other hand, never raises his voice, but is always secure of his readers' attention. His style approximates to music, rather than colour, with

cadences which fasten the phrase into the mind like rhyme. Parts of his Letters, the Essays—above all, perhaps, "Esmond"—seem almost perfect in their easy yet exquisitely mannered grace. He also was a creator of character, one of the most prolific of creators, to be mentioned in the same sentence as Fielding and Scott and Dickens. His types are not recognized with the same facility as they pass down the street, nor have they become such household words as those of his great contemporary, but who can doubt that in the novels of these two men of genius Victorian fiction touched the high water-mark of its tide?

Passing from prose to poetry it seems as natural, and as inevitable, to treat Tennyson with Browning as to couple Dickens with Thackeray. But again it is the dissimilarity rather than the likeness that jumps to the eye. To the vulgar view Browning was only "an exuberant financier," a diner out, a cosmopolitan gentleman in a dress coat. Tennyson, to gods and men, was undeniably the poet in life, and—fortunate even in death—he passed away peacefully, with the moonlight streaming into the uncurtained room, and his hand resting on the open pages of "Cymbeline." Each poet summed up his life's work in one marvellous book—Tennyson in his "Poems" of 1842, containing such perfect verse as "Ulysses," "The Lotos Eaters," and the "Morte d'Arthur"—Browning in the two volumes of "Men and Women," containing the equally immortal "Fra Lippo Lippi," "The Bishop Orders his Tomb in St. Praxed's Church," and "One Word More." But mark the difference in

the measure meted out to the two poets. Despite the splendour of "Men and Women," Browning continued unsaleable. His books disappeared as "remainders." Tennyson's two volumes of "Poems," on the other hand, caused Wordsworth to acknowledge that they were "very noble in thought, with a diction singularly stately"; Carlyle to write, "Truly it is long since in any English Book, Poetry or Prose, I have felt the pulse of a real man's heart, as I do in this same"; and Peel to grant their author a pension, as "a mark of royal favour to one who had devoted to worthy objects great intellectual powers." Poetry which could induce praise from Carlyle and from Wordsworth, and extract an annual grant of £200 from a Chancellor of the Exchequer is indeed entitled to admiration. The contents of these volumes are, truly, hard to beat, even by the later writings of their author. Their workmanship is impeccable. They spring of royal lineage, for whilst in sheer picture-making, sense of beauty, and felicity of epithet they approach Keats, in austerity of thought, and feeling for nature, they recall Wordsworth, plus a capacity for self-criticism of which that supreme poet was not always careful. With Edward FitzGerald, I cannot but think that in the "Poems" of 1842 is to be found that ultimate residue of Tennyson's poetry which posterity will never let die.

Before turning from the Victorian era there is a word to be said with respect to the group of poets which succeeded Tennyson and Browning, and which included Swinburne, Rossetti, and Morris.

Each of these three poets was a man of genius, and two of them at least remarkable personalities. Swinburne was very nearly the finest lyric poet England ever had. He might have been quite the finest had his intellectual equipment corresponded with his astounding technical accomplishment. As Tennyson remarked, he was a reed through which all things blew to music. Rossetti brought qualities of Southern emotion into a literature which has always felt shy in the expression of passion, and awkward in its presence. Morris proved himself our best story-teller in verse since the days of Chaucer. But great as these writers were individually, they were even more powerful as a school, for they were bound together in a single sympathy, and this common denominator was their love for the Middle Ages. To each of these men in varying degree, but more especially to William Morris, the ideals of mediaevalism (humorously included by our forefathers in the term "Dark Ages") became an inspiration. The art and literature of the Middle Ages, its architecture, its gaiety and colour, its political and social conceptions, the system of the great mediaeval Guilds—these, and such subjects as these—became matters of moment and concern to Morris and his followers. These ideals lent a fresh accent, a new beauty, a more impassioned utterance to the later Victorian literature. And the influence of that school has not failed yet, for look about in what direction we will, we find men turning to the mediaeval ideals with sympathy, as possibly affording a solution to the insistent problems of to-day.

When I count over the achievements in Literature of the Victorian epoch, even as outlined so inadequately here, I feel confident that it is worthy to succeed the golden periods of our past. I feel sure that the present misprision of the title "Victorian" "will no less surely go its way as a flippancy of fashion than it will be succeeded by fresh illustrations of the habit, constant in fallen man, of belittling the age next before his own in the gross." If it be suggested that my appreciation dates me indubitably on my own theory, I agree at once, and can only urge that great indeed are the compensations of age.

Now, I am free to admit that youth does not bestow on the nineteenth century many such comfortable words as these. The motto seems to be—Above all, no flowers. The spokesmen of youth hasten to express their opinion of that century in exceedingly uncomplimentary terms. A distinguished publicist finds it "the most villainous and tyrannous period in recorded history." A prominent poet of the Georgian School—it is true I believe him to be an American—loudly proclaims his "antipathy, and even contempt, for Milton and Victorianism, and the softness of the nineties"; whilst a critic, who may almost be considered the official apologist (or I should rather say *eulogist*) of the Georgians, says in a book of essays, "Youth, especially the youth of to-day, is out of sympathy with the Tennysonian era; he can understand Brooke and Flecker; they represent the pinnacle of genius to him, and after all, why not?" I imagine that these critical gentlemen do largely

express and interpret the inarticulate feelings of "youth" to himself. Youth does not care for Victorian literature as a whole; he may be interested in this name or that, but very generally he either criticizes by the silence of indifference, or is too apt to scorn that which he has never read. The "comfort and compromise" of the Victorian era are not to the mind of many of our Georgian writers, nor to those to whom they appeal. This note is very clear and insistent in the New Beatitudes, for instance, which conclude and sum up one of the most arresting of latter-day novels, Mr. Hugh Walpole's "Fortitude": "Blessed be Pain and Torment and every torture of the Body. Blessed be Plague and Pestilence and the Illness of Nations. Blessed be all Loss and the Failure of Friends and the Sacrifice of Love. Blessed be the Destruction of all Possessions, the Ruin of all Property, Fine Cities and Great Palaces. Blessed be the Disappointment of all Ambitions. Blessed be all Failure and the Ruin of every Earthly Hope. Blessed be all Sorrows, Torments, Hardships, Endurances that demand Courage. Blessed be these things—for of these things cometh the making of a man." There is little enough of Victorian comfort and compromise here. Perhaps the creed may be higher. It is certainly more disturbing. And just as the young criticize the comfort and compromise of Victorianism, so also they complain of its timidity and prudery. On certain aspects of life, and as to certain habits of speech, there was, no doubt, a very considerable reserve practised by the Victorian writers. It was a

reticence deliberately defended by Tennyson in a well-known passage of "Locksley Hall—60 years after." Foreign critics of our literature unkindly describe this reserve as hypocrisy, and it was in flaming agreement with this view, as well as to bring a blush to the cheek of Mrs. Grundy, that Swinburne composed his first series of "Poems and Ballads." In consequence of persistent effort the borders of what is permissible in literature have been widely enlarged, and I, for one, rejoice in the greater freedom of the artist. But freedom presupposes responsibility, and it is up to the artist to walk warily, and to use his hardly won liberty with moderation, and not as a cloak of maliciousness. There was published in recent years a story of school life, a remarkable novel in any case, but an amazing book, taking into account the age of the author. One of the aims of the writer was to make his schoolboys speak naturally, and he sought to secure the desired effect through realism. My own opinion is that his phonograph erred on the side of understatement, but, even so, the result was gaudy as a field of poppies. Now in one of his earlier novels Charles Dickens dealt with thieves, trainers of thieves, and murderers. The talk of such persons I should imagine to be crude, possibly cruder than that of the public school boy. Throughout these many pages, so far as I remember, bad language is a frightful minus quantity, and yet the characters stand out in horrid relief. The Victorian method is not all disadvantage—granting genius in the writer. Again, Thackeray once essayed a scene of passion. A wife is to dine with

her lover, wearing the jewels of his gift, and her husband, escaping from the bailiff's house where he lay under arrest for debt, interrupts the assignation. We all remember Becky Sharp and Rawdon Crawley and the Marquis of Steyne. Thackeray was an early Victorian, he lived in a prudish age, and he wrote with his right hand tied behind him; but I know no scene of its kind to equal this in later—and freer—English literature. But there were giants in the land in those days.

The quarrel of Youth with Victorianism goes deeper than any mere criticism of the nineteenth century. It springs really from a change of ideals. The young have cut loose from the old moorings; they have lost their tradition, and no longer believe as their fathers told them. They are frankly experimental, always testing new impressions with an insatiable curiosity. Everything goes into the melting-pot—religion, politics, conduct—and out of the ferment they prepare the mess of pottage they must eat. "Youth" declines to take advantage of the experience of the ages, and, to the unsympathetic onlooker, seems very much in the position of a man who should refuse to recognize the properties of a drug by any other process than by conducting experiments on his own person. We cannot wonder if, at times, some little accident results. Youth is out to make, perhaps not a new heaven, but a new earth. This surely, is the root of their quarrel with the nineteenth century.

We should expect the novel of to-day to present

a picture of our times, and to express the difficulties and aspirations of the present generation. Fiction is the most popular of the arts, the distinctive art of these latter days, and far more than poetry, or drama, or the cinema, it holds the mirror up to Nature. I do not say that this fiction is always a recreation. No such claim is made for it by its veriest devotees. " The modern novel is not a diversion at all, but a new religion, an essential factor in education, a complete guide to the art of living." This novel suffers from no lack of practitioners. The friendly critic from whom I have quoted immediately before names some twenty novelists of peculiar merit, and adds, " I firmly feel that out of my score or so of great writers, ten at least stand right out from their generation, and deserve to live so long as English literature is read." The claim is high, but so far as the inclusion of Mr. H. G. Wells is concerned, the compliment is deserved, and may be admitted. He is indeed a novelist of singular merit. If the modern novel be considered from the point of view of " a religion," " an education," " a guide to living," Mr. Wells seems our ablest and most representative writer of fiction. Never did man move with more alert a step, or was so fertile and interested in ideas. It is impossible to keep touch with his manifold activities, and it is only his excessive and uncanny cleverness that makes one wonder whether he really be a genius. " Tono-Bungay " and " The New Machiavelli " did distinctly reveal a generation to itself; and " Mr. Britling Sees it Through " is the finest novel con-

cerned with the war. I doubt, however, whether Mr. Wells can, with strict propriety, be considered a Georgian. King George was crowned, according to the calendar, in 1910, and Mr. Wells was a celebrity long before that date. The true Georgian novelist is of a younger generation, and is more faithfully represented by Mr. Hugh Walpole, Mr. D. H. Lawrence, and Mr. Compton Mackenzie than by Mr. Wells, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Galsworthy, or Joseph Conrad. The three former names form a singularly able trio, keenly observant of the life about them, absorbed in its ideas, and artistically capable of putting the result of their observation and thought into character and form. Intellectually they are of remarkable distinction. The novels of Mr. Lawrence seem best to portray the ferment and unquiet of our times; Mr. Walpole preaches gladly from the great text, "'Tisn't Life that matters! 'Tis the courage you bring to it"; whilst Mr. Mackenzie is concerned with brightly coloured cinema pictures of our feverish search for distraction, and with the choice of a path which may lead to our peace. It is common knowledge —and it seems a little ironic in one so occupied with the unrest of his generation—that Mr. Mackenzie has found his own private peace by a return to the old religion in its strictest form. Those critics who represent the views of "age," who speak at times with impatience of the "fledgeling century," and say outright that there will be time to consider the Georgian novelist when that century has grown up, would find much to interest and to admire in the work of writers such as these, if

only they would give them the attention they undoubtedly deserve.

In the short space remaining I wish to say a word on the deeply interesting subject of Georgian Poetry. It is very natural and proper that the poetry of a generation should appeal with peculiar force to the men and women of that generation. That poetry expresses their ideals and aspirations and difficulties in a more intimate fashion than is possible to the insensitive and clumsy vehicle of prose. But care must be exercised that this laudable love should not be so unreasonably jealous as to exclude all devotion to the poetry of the past. To understand Brooke and Flecker is admirable. To allow them to represent to us the pinnacle of genius is absurd. If we do so we confuse the canons of taste, for the masterpieces of our earlier literature are a very lantern to our feet. Brooke and Flecker also are derivative from masters greater than themselves. The claim made on behalf of Georgian poetry by its enthusiasts is very high. "You may talk about the Renascence of Wonder, of the Elizabeth lyricists, and other golden periods of English literature, but I feel absolutely certain on this one point, that the greatest age in our national history, if not that in the whole world, is here and now. Not as individuals, but collectively, we are living in the supreme age of lyrical sweetness." Now, I, myself, do not shrink from praising our Georgian poets in superlatives, but my worship is a little this side of idolatry. But whether such extravagance of praise can be justified or not, this, at least, is true

and well observed, that these last years have witnessed a remarkable revival of interest in the Cinderella of the arts. An astonishing number of volumes of verse have been produced during the past ten years, and the average of merit is excellently high. Those of us, who, for one reason or another, are unable to keep abreast of these many volumes, owe a debt to the Poetry Bookshop, for the various anthologies of "Georgian Poetry" published at that Sign. These anthologies, appearing at intervals of about two years, enable the busy student at least to keep in touch with the best in verse now being written by the younger generation. It is unfortunate that two of the most gifted contributors to those anthologies have died before their time. The loss to Letters undoubtedly is great, for the hopes of English poetry were largely bound up with these two men. Flecker died in the course of nature, but the war—or, rather, cataclysm—which has taken such tithe of our freshest and most valuable life, seldom did us a worse service than when it struck down Rupert Brooke. His loss is the more grievous, because he was just learning to write. His early work, witty and brilliant as it is, I think, was overpraised, largely by reason of his radiant personality. Certainly there is nothing in that early work to compare with the incomparable handful of sonnets he wrote immediately before his end. These sonnets make one forget the glaring faults of taste some of us disliked in those younger verses, for they have about them the assurance of immortality. As is well said by a critic with whom it is

my happiness to find myself in constant agreement, "In his grave rest, beyond doubt, the highest expectations of the poetic movement which he seemed destined, in the very hour of his death, to turn into richer and more profitable channels."

The death of Flecker from consumption was little less of a tragedy. If inspiration scarcely lighted upon him as it did visibly, now and again, upon Brooke, on the other hand he was easily the most accomplished artist of his school. He was no rash experimentalist, but a very cunning craftsman. Flecker had two passions—French poetry and Eastern romance. The one taught him how to shape and order his verses; the other flooded those verses with light and colour and scent. He was made by Paris and by the Oriental bazaar. Flecker, in a sense, should have proved of more value to English letters even than Brooke. Young poets find it easier to imitate Brooke's bad taste than to catch his inspiration. If they but studied Flecker's rhythmical and careful workmanship with more sympathy, perhaps there would be fewer of those crabbed and unmusical lines which afflict the ear so constantly in Georgian verse.

But though much be taken, much abides. Britain is indeed a nest of singing birds, and if not all our singing birds are larks and nightingales, there are those amongst us whose song must ravish any sensitive ear. I would instance Mr. John Drinkwater, Mr. John Masefield, Mr. Ralph Hodgson, and, above all, Mr. Walter de la Mare, as peculiarly sympathetic to my personal taste. The chief impression left upon the mind of any reader

who appreciates Mr. Drinkwater for the first time would be the essentially English qualities of his verse. He is of his country through and through —English in theme, English in landscape, English in tradition, English in moderation. A more complete contrast to Flecker can scarcely be imagined. Instead of the exotic and garish colours of the East, we have a beauty as of English lawns and gardens, homely and restful both to eye and heart. His workmanship is very conscientious ; and it is surely no matter for regret that an English poet should sing in a fashion learned in our own schools —a fashion, after all, taught him by masters with whom there are few to compare in modern European literature.

Mr. Masefield is very various, and of his three poetical personalities the earlier and the later are distinctly to be preferred. For the Mr. Masefield sandwiched between I have less liking. His tracts in rhyme—and very odd rhyme it is frequently enough—entitled " The Everlasting Mercy " and " The Widow in the Bye Sweet " may have made their author popular with the crowd, but too much smoke mingles with their flame—too much language with the literature—and his music sounds far more enticingly in " Ballads and Poems," in " Lollingdon Downs," and in " Reynard the Fox." Mr. Masefield's distinctive gift is his sense of Beauty, and when the queen's daughter is all glorious within, surely her clothing, too, should be of wrought gold.

Mr. Ralph Hodgson has published two volumes of verse, but practically is known to the public by

his tiny booklet of " Poems." The verses included there have been familiar for long in the delectable chap-books of " Flying Fame." In their simplicity, their pictorial and imaginative beauty, these poems were peculiarly suited to such a method of publication. Now that they are brought together it is possible to feel that they (together with the work of Mr. De la Mare) present the very pick and flower of Georgian poetry. Such colour and intensity of feeling as find expression in " The Bull " ; such flood of lyrical rapture as bursts forth irrepressibly in the " Song of Honour " ; such individual and exquisite snatches of song as " The Mystery " and " Stupidity Street "—these are gifts to be prized even in a treasure-house so rich and various as the House Beautiful of English Poetry. Mr. Hodgson's work is a matter of great concern, and it is therefore gratifying to note that in common with every one of the representative Georgian poets mentioned, he keeps steadily on the highway of English literature, and follows the great tradition which derives from Chaucer, passes through the Elizabethan poets, the Lake School and the Romantics, and by way of the despised Victorians influences the poets of to-day.

With such a heritage in common it is a serious misfortune that the representatives of " Age " and " Youth " stand, as it were, back to back, each looking at what is spread before their eyes, each indifferent to the prospect that commends itself to the other. If blame must be apportioned between them, perhaps the larger share must attach to " Youth," which seems not to allow with

sufficient modesty for the consensus of critical opinion as to the worth and dignity of the literature of the centuries preceding their own. But the gap between the ideals of "Youth" and "Age" can be bridged only by sympathy. As I said earlier in this paper, without sympathy—inherent or acquired, by birth or of grace—we cannot hope to appreciate justly any work of art whatever. Unless we possess this sympathy our judgments are mere personal whims and whams, utterly valueless, except as expressing our untutored individuality. I entertain no grossly exaggerated estimate of any man's private judgment, even after he has done his best to get rid of prejudices springing from original sin, but without that effort no one's opinion is of any concern whatever, even on the comparatively unimportant subject of Victorian and Georgian Literature.

Dante (1321–1921)

ON the 14th day of September, 1921, men and women, in all parts of the civilized world, recalled with a common devotion the glorious memory of Dante Alighieri. Six hundred years ago, that very day, the most famous of mediaeval poets ceased to eat the exile's bread he found so salt on his palate ; and to be remembered for six long centuries with such a passion of reverence is indeed a foretaste of immortality. In the case of Dante the piety of remembrance is not limited to the comparatively small number of persons interested in letters. His personality appeals to many different classes of men, for he touched life at many points, and always with the highest distinction. He was a great politician, a great layman, a great lover, as well as a supreme poet. He was concerned with all the arts, the knowledge, the emotions, that ennoble and dignify life ; and casting his net so widely, he is secure of the attention of a large and various audience.

Moreover, it is the fortune of Dante to be the most memorable and distinguished figure in that century which rises like a peak above its fellows. However regarded, the thirteenth century is of the utmost value to a student. It was the period in which the magnificent philosophy of the Middle Age—that is to say the ideas which governed its political and theological conceptions—burnt to a white flame. It was then that the classics were

rediscovered, and stone cathedrals rose "like Gothic Queens at prayer, alone, silent, and adorned." It was the century of Giotto, the father of modern painting; of Francis of Assisi, the friar who reproduced with startling exactness the very life of Christ; of St. Louis the King, who carried holiness to the extreme limit permitted to man; of St. Thomas Aquinas, master of the Divine Science, and the angel of the schools. In its concerns and characters Dante was passionately absorbed, for of that century, beyond all other men, he was the true compendium and synthesis.

Dante was born in the famous town of Florence in the latter part of May, 1265. He was the son of a notary, and came of ancient stock, for he mentions with pardonable pride the exploits of an ancestor who took the Cross against the Infidel. His family seems to have been of no political importance, although of some moderate fortune, for despite the temporary triumph of the Ghibellines, his father—who favoured the Guelfs—was permitted to remain unmolested in his native city. Dante's parents died in his early youth, and the lad, of a sensitive and poetic temperament, fell early under the influence of love. This love was no idle fancy for Rosaline before the advent of Juliet, but, rather, a god of terrible aspect, who constrained his worshipper to cry, trembling, "Behold, a god stronger than I, who, coming, shall rule over me." The record of this radiant devotion of Dante for Beatrice is enshrined in the fragrant pages of the "Vita Nuova," the most delicate and exquisite of all romances dealing with

love. It is the addition of " one burning drop of idealism " to the somewhat gross love poetry of the Middle Age. The book consists of a sequence of lyrics and sonnets with a prose gloss or commentary—like apples of gold in pictures of silver—and by the title, " The New Life," the poet probably meant to intimate the transfiguration of his days by his love of Beatrice. The incidents are of the simplest. Dante recalls his first vision of Beatrice as a girl of some nine years, " her dress of a most noble colour, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her very tender age." After a lapse of nine years he sees her again, clothed all in pure white, walking between two gentle ladies older than she, and of her unspeakable courtesy she gives him her most sweet salutation—so that he beheld the very limits of blessedness. He wept at her wedding feast. With agony he set his foot upon and crushed the element of earthly passion in his love. He dreamed in anticipatory vision of her death, and when the vision became dreadful reality he condensed his grief into the exceeding bitter cry from Jeremiah, " How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people."

It is strange that so many commentators persist in regarding " the giver of blessings " as a mere abstraction. Surely tradition and argument alike are right when they affirm that Beatrice was no philosophic abstraction but a dearest reality. No pleading—however ingenious—overcomes the conviction that this lady was the daughter of Folco Portinari, and the wife of Simone dei Bardi. No

personification of philosophy—crabbed or divine—suggested the concluding passages of the "Vita Nuova." Only a woman of breathing flesh and of running blood could have inspired that highly wrought and impassioned close:

> If it be His pleasure, through whom is the life of all things, that my life continue with me a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After the which, may it seem good unto Him who is the Master of Grace, that my spirit should go hence to behold the glory of its lady: to wit, of that blessed Beatrice who now gazeth continually on His countenance, who is blessed throughout all ages.

A noticeable change in the life of Dante ensued upon the death of Beatrice. There was always plenty of virility in the delicate dreamer of "The New Life" whose ultra-refined features are preserved to us on the wall of the Bargello. During the very composition of that languid masterpiece he had distinguished himself in arms by fighting valiantly on horseback in the front rank at the Battle of Campaldino. His moral character became lax, and his choice of friends open to criticism. This was but a passing phase, and Dante took himself seriously to task. He devoted less time to the study of those Provençal troubadours whom he imitated so closely in youth. Philosophy absorbed him, and he became a practical politician. He even found occasion to marry a lady, Gemma Donati, from whom he remained happily separated during the greater part of their wedded life. Politics were responsible for much of the misery that became Dante's portion.

The politics of Florence were extremely confused. They began with the war of the Red and White Lilies, between Guelf and Ghibelline, between partisan of Pope and Emperor, and, after the triumph of the former, continued in the faction fights and vulgar squabbles of the Black and White Guelfs. To enable him to become a professional politician, Dante was enrolled a member of the Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries, and entering on public life as an adherent of the Whites, presently rose to be one of the six priors of the city. All his misfortunes took their cause and origin from this unlucky priorate. When the Whites were jockeyed and outmanœuvred by their adversaries, Dante as a prominent leader was fined, exiled, and sentenced to be burnt to death on a trumped-up charge of malversation of public funds. The sentence was severer than that passed on his colleagues. Doubtless Dante was not an easy person to live with. He went abroad scattering proud and bitter speeches, and, sowing the wind, he reaped the whirlwind. No wonder self-examination taught him that pride was the chiefest of the seven deadly sins. He was an uneasy bedfellow, and Gemma Donati and others could have sympathized with the Scottish mother who exclaimed, "God help the man who is chained to our Davy." Nature had dowered this poet with the hate of hate, and the scorn of scorn, as well as with the love of love.

And now began that climbing of steep stairs which was to occupy Dante's feet for the remainder of his days, and which makes a pilgrimage upon

the Via Dolorosa of this austere spirit of such poignant interest to the wayfarer. Possibly Dante may be found as far afield as Paris and Oxford—Oxford even. Certainly he will be met with in Verona at the table of Can Grande; at Padua, probably in the Arena Chapel, watching Giotto at his business of painting; at Siena, absorbed over that Duomo pavement, presently to afford him one of the most striking pictures of his "Purgatory"; at Ravenna, where for some four short years he tasted a measure of peace in the company of his children—Ravenna, where at the age of fifty-seven he entered on eternal peace, and was laid to rest in that strange little chapel on the outskirts of that strange and derelict city.

During the nineteen years of his exile Dante was occupied chiefly with the composition of that wonderful Catholic masterpiece, "The Divine Comedy." It was shapen laboriously, canto by canto, over a long series of years, in many lodgings, and is the fulfilment of that great vow made upon the death of Beatrice to write concerning her what had not before been written of woman. The author entitled his epic, "The Comedy of Dante Alighieri," explaining that it dealt in the vulgar tongue with matters that rose from a base to a prosperous issue. Posterity has added a qualifying adjective, because of the Divine Science with which the poem is concerned, and also by reason of its astonishing beauties. The subject is the journey of Dante, described with an utmost realism, under the guidance of Virgil and Beatrice,

through the regions of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. It rises from the crude and sickening tortures of the "Inferno," through the place of remedial suffering, to the presence of Beatrice and Mary, and to the Beatific Vision. In essence it is a parable of the soul sunk in sin, purified by repentance, brought to peace, made king and priest over itself, mitred, and crowned. The actual dream on which the poem is founded is referred to in the "Vita Nuova," but for practical purposes the Vision is placed in 1300, when the poet was in his thirty-fifth year. The journey commenced at daybreak on the Good Friday of that year, and the pilgrimage lasted seven days, Easter itself being spent before the Mountain of Purgatory. I do not think that "The Divine Comedy" is an easy book to read. Dante did not profess to feed his readers on sugar-plums, nor did he consider his poem on Hell a substitute for confectionery. He wrote to quicken and inflame the conscience, and to force attention to the overwhelming realities of the Four Last Things. In its cantos he poured his knowledge of Nature and of human nature; he developed his high conception of politics and religion—the Emperor and Pope considered respectively as guardians of men's temporal and spiritual concerns; he uttered his astoundingly candid and naked criticism of life. For the purposes of his art an exile's experiences must have proven invaluable. Neither do I think that the epic should be judged on single episodes, however searching. We may be shaken with pity or terror by the story of La Pia or Paolo and Francesca, and

intolerably moved at the meeting with Beatrice, but we should not dwell overmuch on these detachable beauties. The true greatness of the work (as Dean Church rightly insisted) resides in the whole, in that vast intellectual conception which renders us blind and deaf and dumb to the faults of which it certainly has its share.

Dante began life as the delicate dreamer of the Bargello ; he ended it lean, with the reek of Hell upon his beard. He wrote first the mystic love story of Beatrice, but that lovely melody was, as it were, played upon a scrannel pipe of straw compared with the cantos of " The Divine Comedy," in which, with a full orchestra, he perfected her praise. Dante was a great politician, a great layman, a glorious poet ; perhaps, after all, his highest distinction is that he was a supreme lover.

The Influence of John Keats (October 31st, 1795–February 23rd, 1821)

ON the 15th day of April, 1445, a young girl of marvellous beauty was found in one of the ancient tombs which then bordered the Appian Way. Though she had lain for ages and ages in her uninviting retreat she was yet alive—at least it almost seemed that she lived, so fulfilled were her hair and her eyes "with the sweetness and light of the spring." An inscription upon her grave recorded the bare fact that her name was Julia—Julia, the daughter of Claudius. The beautiful maiden was carried in triumph to the Capitol, and for a short space of time the artists and poets of the city came to dream over so wonderful a vision. The priests and the civil authorities, however, agreed that such proceedings could not be tolerated in any reputable society, for the one order feared lest the people should return to paganism, whilst the other argued that the proper place for a dead body was the grave. At the first convenient opportunity, therefore, they restored Julia to the decent obscurity of her home, with as little fuss as possible, and after the interlude of this nine days' wonder, respectable, humdrum, commonplace life went on as before, undisturbed by any disquieting reminder of forgotten and buried beauty. I tell this story for what it is worth, and I do not tell it on affidavit. Half-believers—whom I heartily despise—hint that it is

a mere parable of the Renaissance, of that time when the Middle Ages took fire from the classical torch. If this be true, and my legend but a fond thing vainly invented, I must console myself with the thought that the apotheosis of Julia occurred not only on a certain spring morning of the fifteenth century in Rome, but has chanced once and again in divers countries and periods ever since. For wherever art is touched to passion and to finer issues by the counsels of perfection from a great past, there Julia, the daughter of Claudius (perhaps under another name) is borne from her tomb with pomp to the market-place; and it is because our own England of the prosaic nineteenth century witnessed such an awakening that I have ventured to introduce my little apologue in a paper on John Keats.

John Keats died on the 23rd of February, 1821, not having completed his twenty-sixth year. Biographies of poets are not always bank holiday reading, and in a certain sense the life of Keats is no exception to the common rule. His poetry, copious and marvellous as it was, did not afford him the oatmeal on which Meredith somehow managed to cultivate literature, for, as Browning pertinently inquires, "What porridge had John Keats?" He was harassed continually by financial difficulties. Ambition put a maggot in his brain; passion fevered his blood; and he fell sick of a consumption. Critics and his contemporaries proved often as bleak as his destiny. The highest praise Keats got from Wordsworth, always generous in appreciation, was that his "Ode" was a

very pretty piece of paganism. Byron, with characteristic large-heartedness, wrote to his publisher, " No more Keats, I entreat ; flay him alive ; if some of you don't I must skin him myself ; there is no bearing the drivelling idiotism of the manikin." The careful charity of Blackwood—solicitous for an erring apothecary—bade him back to his gallipots, and urged him to " stick to his plasters, pills, and ointment boxes." He died a stranger in a strange land, apparently a hopeless failure, leaving a name which he modestly trusted would be inscribed amongst the English poets, and an epitaph which recorded the bitterness of his humiliation. Yet the same century which witnessed his failure registered the complete triumph of his plea upon appeal. The growth of no literary fame has been steadier and more continuous than that of John Keats. A consensus of judgment by his peers has pronounced with Fitz-Gerald that he is " more akin to Shakespeare, in a perfect circle of poetic faculties, than any poet since " ; with Tennyson, that he " would have been, if he had lived, the greatest of us all " ; with Dr. Bridges, " If one English poet might be recalled from the dead to continue the work which he left unfinished on earth, it is probable that the crown of his country's desire would be set on the head of John Keats." But even more significant of Keats's position in literature than any praise, however glowing and sincere, is the astonishing influence he has exerted on the poetry of the last one hundred years. Being dead he yet speaketh by the mouth of those whose tongue-string he hath

unloosed. I take it that Keats's peculiar genius may be defined, inadequately, as a sense of Beauty, quickened by imagination, and touched with emotion, expressed in terms of the most compelling and flawless art. It is impossible to study modern English poetry without finding evidences of his influence on every side. Keats's conscious—almost self-conscious—artistry, his æsthetic, the principles underlying and forming the basis of his art, his devotion to certain forms and schools of verse, his grave and coloured music, such things as these are plainly recognizable in the writings, and as the preferences, of his successors. The very greatest of them seem unable to escape this influence, for it is subtle and ambient as the air. Tennyson was his creature in a far larger measure than the late Laureate ever recognized. Rossetti managed to combine a devotion to Coleridge with his worship of Keats; but Morris was whole-hearted in allegiance, holding him to be the first of modern poets. Quite naturally it was the colour, the romance, the mediaevalism of "The Eve of St. Agnes," "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," and "The Eve of St. Mark" which inspired their enthusiasm. They were painters all; and the latter fragment might well have been torn from the pages of "The Earthly Paradise." The minor writers of the same school followed, and exaggerated, such salient features, becoming too frequently but garish replicas of a great original. And in these later days the most distinguished of our younger poets clearly have realized themselves in his mould and music. Flecker, the most gifted of them all,

technically, was saturated with his qualities ; and neither Mr. Squire's " Moon " nor Mr. Aldous Huxley's " Leda " would have borne quite the same aspect had it not been for their creators' intimate acquaintance with the master's handiwork.

It would be idle to contend that Keats's influence on contemporary literature is so apparent now as on that of some previous generations. The war has induced a new scale of values, æsthetic and moral. The themes selected by our youthful poets are not such as lend themselves to ornate treatment ; and young men in a hurry have no time to waste on elaboration of technique. But though his example may be neglected, it should not be concluded that his reputation is on the wane. The very reverse is the case. It was but in 1917 that Sir Sidney Colvin's monumental Life of the poet appeared, and was received deservedly with every mark of interest and approval. Sir Sidney Colvin belongs, of course, to an earlier generation, but in the appreciation of Keats's genius the Young Guard marches steadily to the support of the veterans of Marengo. They are in cordial agreement with the highest estimate of the value of Keats's work, but they emphasize strongly the potential capacity of his gifts. There is, indeed, every indication both in his correspondence and in the Induction to " Hyperion " that Keats was groping his way to a simpler and a fuller form of self-expression. In this new art the head was to count for more than the chaplet, and the arm to be worthier than its jewelled bracelet. Porphyro and Madeline, for instance, as human beings

with human passions, would dominate a rewritten "Eve of St. Agnes," instead of remaining gracious abstractions, purely subsidiary to a sumptuous and obliterating decoration. This may well be true, but discarding prophecy, and accepting his work just as it stands, the commentary of Arnold on Keats's modest phrase, "I think I shall be among the English poets after my death," must win heartfelt approval from every student of literature. "He is, he is with Shakespeare."

At a time when English poetry was a nymph of measure and restraint who went attired in a gown of Quaker grey, Julia, the daughter of Claudius, again was discovered in her tomb. Amongst the earliest of those who came to wonder upon her loveliness was John Keats. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and the divine Spirit of Poetry incalculably chose an ostler's son for her mouthpiece. He loved the principle of Beauty in all things. Nature, Greek legends, Gothic cathedrals, Renaissance pictures—he looked upon them all with the eye of a lover. But this apprehension of Beauty was the more common of the two gifts with which he was endowed. She gave him also that passion for perfection which alone permits the faultless vision to be rendered into the equally impeccable line. He was never content until he had loaded every rift of his subject with ore. The very phrase and verse he discarded in the effort are still a treasure-trove for the lesser artist. He is the Titian of poets in his glow and colour and sensuous grace. For a hundred years his influence is over all our literature, and modern writers are

largely the work of his hand and the breath of his inspiration. His name is written, not in water, as he said in his dejection, but wherever an English poet gazes simply and directly on Beauty, and translates his emotion into flawless verse.

The Tercentenary of Jean de la Fontaine (1621-1921)

(Born 8th July, 1621)

THE long reign of Louis the Fourteenth included the classical age of French literature. That reign, in many of its phases, was the zenith of monarchical glory. It expressed itself in deeds of arms, in policy, and in courtly ceremonial, and it culminated in the mad magnificence of Versailles. The noble rhetoric of Racine and of Bossuet seems peculiarly appropriate to so pompous a period, and it is strange that the most charming and entertaining figure amongst these eminent personages should prove the improvident and irresponsible *bonhomme* who ran lightly up the steps of the Academy with a slender volume of Fables and Apologues in his hand.

Jean de la Fontaine—the tercentenary of whose birth was observed on July 8th, 1921—was born of middle-class parents at Château-Thierry in Champagne. He was educated in the picturesque little town, and later in life became an honoured guest at the château which stood upon the hill. His first intention was to take Holy Orders, but after sixteen months' residence in seminaries, his superiors decided that he had no vocation for the priesthood. He then turned to law and became a barrister, so that in due course he should succeed to his father's office as Controller of Waters and

Forests. But his heart was as little concerned with law as with theology. He sauntered through ten happy years at Château-Thierry, dreaming, observing Nature, studying old French literature, and falling in and out of love with an equal facility. This was an excellent preparation for his future work, but not conducive to worldly prosperity. Absence of mind became his ruling passion, or, at least, a settled habit. If he rode on the business of his office to Paris, it was odds but he lost his saddle-bag, stuffed with documents, whilst absorbed in the weaving of rhymes. When received by *Le Roi Soleil* he forgot the book of verses he was to proffer his august patron; and, more inexcusably, left behind him the purse of gold which was the monarch's gift in return. He contrived to forget even that he was wedded to a wife. La Fontaine's parents had married him early to a pretty girl of fourteen, but his duties as a husband and father sat lightly enough upon him. He saw his wife as seldom as possible, and did not recognize his son when chancing upon him unawares. The lady, apparently, was literary and a trifle coquettish, and two of a trade in one house seldom agree. La Fontaine preferred literary ladies away from home. He frequented a *salon* where the hostess was both pretty and a charming writer of verse. The guest appreciated either quality equally. At last an unobtrusive husband in the background died, whilst the flow of poetry unaccountably ceased. Before dying, however, he had considerately composed obituary verses for his widow to pen; but when the fraud was dis-

covered, not even the lady's comeliness sufficed to temper la Fontaine's resentment.

La Fontaine went to Paris, and embarked on the necessary business of finding a patron. He was fortunate enough to recommend himself to Fouquet, the Superintendent of Finance, and received from him a pension, in consideration, apparently, of the writing of certain poems. This, characteristically enough, he failed to do, for task-work was abhorrent to him. When the Minister fell into disgrace, our neglectful poet showed considerable moral courage by inditing epistles in verse beseeching for him the clemency of the King. He even shared his patron's exile. But if one door shut, another opened, and throughout a long life la Fontaine was never to be without powerful protectors and friends. In the house of one great lady he was destined to find a home for some twenty years. Moreover, he had become a member of a group of famous writers which included Boileau, Racine, and Molière. With these eminent men he lived in lifelong affection, for, although an inconstant lover, he yet possessed a genius for friendship. In their congenial company the sunny nature of la Fontaine opened like a flower. Awkward and distrait in general society —reserving, like Goldsmith, his grace and wit for literary purposes—with them he was neither silent nor aloof. In addition he was steadily at work on that collection of "Contes," drawn from various sources, which was soon to secure him so large and so various an audience. These poems were read first by their author in the fashionable drawing-

rooms he frequented, to a circle feminine and cultured, but certainly far from squeamish. Several volumes of such tales were published at various dates, and were widely enjoyed, for there was that in them to gratify every taste. La Fontaine deprecated the scandal, and excused his audacities, by suggesting that these latter were essential to a short story. Certainly such qualities were explicit enough in the old French and Italian authors from whom he derived. But who could resist stories told with such gaiety, with such measure, economy, and grace? A trifle heavy they might seem in getting under weigh, but, once started, how smoothly the ship proceeded on its voyage, and with what distinction it cast anchor in the destined port. The ease of the versification is as remarkable as the conduct of the narrative. The rhythm has nothing of the stiff formality we associate with its period, but is modern in its freedom and movement, the metre varying with the theme and with the emotion expressed.

Astonishing as is the volume entitled "Contes et Nouvelles," it yet does not constitute its author's true title to immortality, and this is convincing testimony to his poetic genius. That distinction is reserved for the famous "Fables." It seems odd that the debonair narrator of salacious stories should have produced as his masterpiece a book of fables which all French children learn from their mothers' lips—a book which furnishes the language with a fund of proverbs, and is not only the delight of childhood, but of the most sophisticated old age. These short swallow-flights of narrative suited

exactly la Fontaine's genius. They are exquisitely finished with the art that removes all traces of labour, for, indolent in everything else, he applied a sensitive conscience to poetry rather than to life. A wide vocabulary, enriched and coloured by intimacy with mediaeval French literature, increases the pleasure of any reader of these familiar apologues. La Fontaine made no pretence of originality, but took his goods as he found them; and just as he had laid Rabelais and Boccaccio under contribution for his narratives, so for his fables he returned to Æsop himself.

These incomparable poems rightly procured la Fontaine the honour of admission to the Academy. Louis the Fourteenth, in the unaccustomed rôle of moralist, postponed his reception. The King appreciated neither "the ridiculous trifles" of Teniers, nor those of la Fontaine, and only assented to his admission on the feather-head formally promising to be *sage*. The leopard cannot change his spots, and the discretion of the fabulist's old age strongly resembled the wild oats of another's youth. But he piously censored the narratives which had scandalized so many, and died on April 13th, 1695, quite peacefully, supported by the consolations of the religion he had never denied. "Do not worry him," said the nurse to the priest who did his duty with a fine excess, "do not worry him; he is only a child." This youngster of a larger growth died at the ripe age of seventy-three years. He was a genius who never grew up; and if his sins were those of a man, his heart was that of a child.

Baudelaire

IT is not necessary to be a French scholar for one to take an interest in the life and writings of Charles Baudelaire. Baudelaire himself was an accomplished student of English literature in certain directions, and, more than any other writer, is responsible for the vogue of Poe and De Quincey in France. Moreover, he is the subject of one of the supreme elegies in our language—Swinburne's wonderful "Ave atque Vale." Baudelaire very nearly enjoyed the privilege of perusing this masterpiece in the flesh, for it was composed in his lifetime, some three months before he actually died, upon a false report of his death. Baudelaire would have enjoyed the experience, for not only is extreme justice done to his gifts, but the threnody is written with a classical sobriety he was peculiarly fitted to appreciate, and incorporates—almost transcribes—certain of the French poet's images into Swinburne's more fluent music. Now Mr. Symons issues a sort of prose complement to Swinburne's poem, and in "Charles Baudelaire, A Study," presents a criticism which covers practically the whole range of the Frenchman's work. The book is not a biography, for it contains little more than the bare facts and dry bones of Baudelaire's life, but it is a piece of work that no living writer was so fitted to produce as Mr. Symons, not only because of knowledge, but also by temperament and taste. We may not always

be able to accept his conclusions—the present writer must emphasize some disagreement in the course of this review—but every competent critic will recognize ungrudgingly the considered principles on which those views are based. In a sense, even, Mr. Symons is too conversant with the French language, and too saturated with French literature, for his familiarity leads him to write such a sentence as " leading a deliciously depraved life," which in English simply sounds comic; whilst his knowledge of books induces him to incorporate in " Charles Baudelaire " a long essay on Villiers de l'Isle Adam, having but the very slightest connexion with his immediate subject.

Mr. Symons's qualifications for dealing with Baudelaire are so pronounced as to include almost a liking for his personality. It is not absolutely essential, I suppose, to love an artist whom one admires—it would be easy to adduce illustrations to the contrary—but a liking for the man certainly predisposes one to appreciate his work. " In our approach to the poetry, or to the prose, of any famous writer with whom we are concerned, we must necessarily approach his personality; in apprehending it we apprehend him, and certainly we cannot love it without loving him. As for Baudelaire, I must confess that, in spite of the fact that one might hate or love the man according to the judgment of the wise or of the unwise, I find him more lovable than hateful." I admit that Mr. Symons's expression of attachment is not very passionate, but even so it goes beyond what most of us would be prepared to subscribe. Baudelaire

cultivated a cynical and starchy detachment; he went abroad scattering the most amazing tropes and theses, and gladly appeared under aspects which he imagined would astonish the simple. He dyed his hair a rural green; he compared the taste of a child's brain with the kernel of nuts; and he willingly embarked on casual conversation with the formidable opening, "After I had murdered my father." These may be legends—at least I am quite willing to believe them to be—but there is no smoke without fire, and such legends do not exactly portray a lovable character with an unconventional sense of humour. But Mr. Symons himself gives a description of a portrait of the poet: "His face and his eyes are contorted as if in a terrible rage; the whole face seems drawn upward and downward in a kind of convulsion; and the aspect, one confesses, shows a degraded type, as if all the vices he had never committed looked out of his eyes in a wild revolt." I suggest the description of this engaging personality would interest an alienist rather than the Brothers Cheeryble.

The fact is that Baudelaire is esteemed not by reason of his lovableness, nor for his excellent moral qualities, but because this extremely undesirable person happens to be a very great artist. On this matter the consensus of critical opinion is practically unanimous. Any voice raised to the contrary is felt at once to be an expression of distaste on quite other grounds than those of art. Victor Hugo declared that Baudelaire had brought a new shudder into literature, and poets

of a younger generation have treated him always with marked deference. Mr. Symons in his turn praises, and indeed over-praises, him with a fine enthusiasm. Had the critic been content to stay his hand at "Les Fleurs du Mal" is the most curious, subtle, fascinating and extraordinary creation of an entire world ever fashioned in modern ages, "we might have been moved to no protest; but on reading Baudelaire described as "the greatest French poet after Villon, the most disreputable and the most creative poet in French literature, the greatest artist in French verse, and after Verlaine the most passionate, perverse, lyrical, visionary, and intoxicating of modern poets," we may express a mild preference for a less flamboyant criticism. Should it be true, then so much the worse for France. I can but imagine that Mr. Symons's conception of great poetry differs from that of his reviewer. Supreme poetry (to quote Mr. Lynd) is not only a transfiguration of life, but a noble transfiguration of life; and much of Baudelaire is ignoble. It will not do—as certain critics have tried—to speak of this disputable portion of Baudelaire's poetry as being composed in a heat of indignation. The holy and consuming indignation that makes a man lean was not in him. He wrote it in the delectation of his heart, and as a man thinketh in his heart so he is.

It does not follow that those who are unable to accept Mr. Symons's extreme claim for Baudelaire have no proper appreciation of his genius. "Les Fleurs du Mal" is a title too largely comprehensive, for very many poems in the collection are

quite unspotted. Its technical qualities are difficult to overrate, for it is a living counsel of perfection to the artist. Every inch of surface is worked over in the fashion to which Keats and Rossetti have accustomed the lover of English literature. And with this perfection of form goes a sense of Beauty in curious contrast with some spectacular ugliness and much sombre imagination. The beauty is largely exotic, and derivative from the East. Baudelaire never forgot that early voyage to the tropics, where he was shipped off to prevent him becoming a poet. The perfume of the limes was ever in his nostrils, and his eyes were full of gracious figures, such as that of the young Malabaraise, in her thin muslin draperies, bearing her pitcher to the well. How much of the school of Loti is implicit in Baudelaire! We may not account him the greatest poet of France since Villon; but for reasons such as these we willingly accept him as one of the most consummate artists of his century.

Mr. Francis William Bain

A COMPETENT writer on subjects connected with the East should be sure of an attentive hearing. Our misty little island, in a far-off northern sea, has always felt the extreme attraction of the sun-steeped East, and even more particularly the spell of India. The nostalgia of the East is in our blood. A Protestant people, we are nurtured from our infancy on that collection of Oriental scriptures called the Bible, with the result that Eastern imagery, Eastern narrative, and Eastern mysticism are as household words. The favourite book of our childhood is, quite probably, the "Arabian Nights." The pleasant legend is told that, soon after their publication, a pious lord-advocate for Scotland having one Saturday found his daughters employed in reading these volumes seized them, with a rebuke for spending the evening before the Sabbath in such worldly and frivolous amusement; but the grave lord-advocate himself became a prey to the fascination of these narratives, being discovered on the morning of the Sabbath itself employed in their perusal, from which he had not risen the whole night through. And to-day for all true lovers of Eastern romance a delectable feast is spread. We have the brilliant stories of modern India by Mr. Kipling—stories which have meant so much to so many readers, since " his astonishing advent with a series of little blue-grey books, whose covers

opened like window shutters to reveal the dusty sun-glare and blazing colours of the East." And, for our delight, we have also the exquisite faery romances of Mr. F. W. Bain, a fellow-worker in India with Mr. Kipling, although in an utterly separate province. For whilst the India of the one is the multi-coloured life moving along the Grand Trunk Road, the India of Mr. Bain is that of the student, the lover of folk-tale and Hindu mythology, the secret dreamer fashioning his delicate dream in the thicket of the Great God's hair.

Mr. Bain's romances form an admirable foil to the narratives of Mr. Kipling, since they are not concerned with the modern world and the life of to-day, and are occupied less with the devils of India than with its gods. Their outstanding merit entitles them to more attention than they have possibly received, for it is difficult to induce the public to display wild interest in tales which are longer than the *conte*, and shorter than the novel of orthodox length. Some eccentric persons—very few—delight in the short story ; many decent citizens rejoice in, and even buy, the packed volume ; but the book betwixt and between forms a perilous stool, from which its maker often tumbles to the ground.

The series of Indian romances commenced by Mr. Bain some five and twenty years ago was put upon the market in a shy and almost furtive fashion, through a publisher not usually associated with unorthodox prefaces and sensuous love stories. The forerunner of these books masqueraded as a translation from the Sanscrit, and

contained an elaborate mystification by way of preface and notes. The manuscript, it was purported, came in gratitude to Mr. Bain from a native dying of the plague, and when cleansed and disinfected was found to be the first of sixteen narratives. A simple-minded public fell into the pit that was digged. Ingenuous scholars, in their simplicity, tripped innocently into the snare. A learned tome on "Human Marriage" gravely ascribed the delectable legend of "Twashtri" and the "Creation of Woman" to a Sanscrit original, and it is affirmed that the British Museum Library indexed the author's work under the heading of translations.

It is difficult to understand Mr. Bain's sustained ascription of his romances to a foreign tongue. It may be that as Charles Lamb regarded the ledgers of the East India House as his true title-deeds of authorship, so Mr. Bain looks upon his real life's work as occupying quite another field than that of fiction. The Principal of Deccan College, Poona, a Professor of History and Political Economy, might well be considered too serious and responsible a person for indulgence in humorous and poetic love stories. It would, indeed, be inadvisable for any reader, carried away by a natural and laudable enthusiasm for Mr. Bain's romances, to give an order for his complete works. The fate of the unhappy enthusiast would resemble that of Queen Victoria, who requested to be supplied with all the writings of the author of "Alice in Wonderland," and found to her dejection and cost that these included the mathematical treatises of the Rev. C. L. Dodgson. The rueful

collector of Professor Bain's complete works would find himself the proud possessor not only of "A Digit of the Moon," but also of such respectable and daunting labours as "The Realization of the Possible," and of "The Physica of Imbecillitate Darwinianism." For the average reader the collection of such books would be an excess of virtue; since there is a point at which virtue becomes a vice, as we may see in the classic and pious instance of King Henry the Eighth, who cheerfully and repeatedly committed murder that he might not break the commandment immediately following.

Thirteen of the sixteen narratives alluded to in "A Digit of the Moon" have now been published, and since Mr. Bain is yet in his fifties we may reasonably expect the series to be completed, and with moderate good fortune even increased. A common love for these Indian stories inspires the same sense of fellowship amongst readers as is derived from a shared delight in the "Essays of Elia" or in Heredia's sonnets. Their titles convey little to differentiate them one from another—these are indeed almost interchangeable—but their average is so high that every devout lover has a peculiar favourite, and in every case wisdom is justified of her children. The probability is that the book which first made the reader free of Mr. Bain's wonder-world remains gratefully in memory as the most delightful of them all. Practically the whole of the thirteen stories are related or set forth by the great god Maheshwara to his wife Parwati. For these deities Mr. Bain cherishes a particular devotion, and is persuaded that he must

have been their pious worshipper in some previous incarnation. It may be so; or with even more probability his devotion simply may be the attraction to that Beauty which, he remarks, is more essential to the world than mathematics or mechanics, missionaries or motor-cars, or even bread and butter. Maheshwara is credited with the invention of all the stories in literature. Wearing the moon as a tire, and hiding Ganga the nymph of the river in his tawny red hair, the god sits with Parwati upon his knee, teasing his wife, plying her with hard questions, and setting before her as a spectacle the pageant of a world. Since Parwati is a very human and a very feminine goddess, she does not acquiesce gladly in the position of Ganga, and since she is abnormally curious, there is no end to the tales told for her delectation—and for ours.

The charm and interest of Mr. Bain's work are due not only to their quality of Beauty; to those fierce dramatic contrasts which are of the essence of the East; to the rich and sumptuous colouring of romantic episodes; to their remarkable felicity of phrase ("her irrefutable eyes") or to those complete sentences which linger in the memory with much of the insistence we associate with poetry rather than with prose. ("The past rose up out of the dark before him, spread like a picture before his eyes, and breathed like a tale into his ears.") These graces they possess, and in the highest degree. But the interest aroused by these faery romances is derived also from the personal standpoint of their author. Mr. Bain is a scholar

familiar with the deepest thought of our Western civilization. He weighs it in the balance against the wisdom of the East, and finds our civilization altogether wanting. Not content to set his Indian stories in their proper atmosphere, he seems himself to breathe this atmosphere more easily than our own more bracing air. "The infinite patience, the imperturbable repose, and the stubborn intractability of the inscrutable East" are in his pages. The melancholy of India—where men love Death rather than Life, and pray readily, "Oh, Shiwa, grant that I may never be born again"—is there also. "Mirage! Mirage! That is the keynote of the old melancholy Indian music; the bass, whose undertone accompanies, with a kind of monotonous solemnity, all the treble variations in the minor key. The world is unreal, a delusion and a snare; sense is deception, happiness a dream; nothing has true being, is absolute, but virtue, the sole reality; that which most emphatically is, attainable only through knowledge, the great illuminator, the awakener to the perception of the truth. We move, like marionettes, pulled by the strings of our forgotten antenatal deeds, in a magic cage, or net, of false and hypocritical momentary seemings; and bitter disappointment is the inevitable doom of every soul, that with passion for its guide in the gloom, thinks to find in the shadows that surround it any substance, any solid satisfaction; any permanent in the mutable; any rest in the ceaseless revolution; any peace which the world cannot give. Who would have peace, must turn his back upon the world; it lies

the Other Way. Three are the Ways: the Way of the World, the Way of Woman, the Way of Emancipation." The philosophy that no action, good or bad, however small, is or ever can be lost, but produces consequences that determine the fortunes of their doer through the series of interminable births and deaths, so that as we go the hounds of deeds long buried in oblivion are on our track, is a creed with which Mr. Bain is in fullest sympathy, if not in assured belief. And, lastly, to tread lightly over a delicate and thorny subject, Mr. Bain's ideal of womanhood is certainly that of the East rather than that of the West. Despite the sumptuous beauty and fascinating qualities of his heroines, he considers woman as the delight and darling of those who are under the spell of Maya (Illusion), and who hug their illusions. She is the enemy of emancipation and the fetter of the soul. The war, which has altered so many opinions and values, has not changed Mr. Bain's ideal of womanhood. His latest books occupy precisely the same position on this subject as his first. I fancy Mr. Bain is in essential agreement with Marshal Pétain, as reported by an enterprising and charming American journalist, "Women inspire the most beautiful ideas in men, and prevent those ideas from being carried out."

Such sentiments may be reprobated, but Mr. Bain's books are too delightful to be ignored, even by the most impassioned of feminists. They can give themselves the delicate revenge of appreciating these narratives, and in so doing they will heap coals of fire on his head.

Mr. James Stephens

IT is remarkable how many of our most distinguished men of letters to-day derive from Ireland. It suffices to enumerate Mr. Shaw, Mr. Yeats, and Mr. Moore in their several spheres, and these, of course, do not exhaust the tale. These authors fortunately do not possess a working knowledge of Gaelic, and to the delight of the Saxon are constrained to write for his delectation in English. A succeeding generation seems likely to continue this laudable practice, for Mr. James Stephens, the most gifted of the younger Irish writers, publishes his admirable narratives and lyrics in the same tongue. Indeed, it is a very excellent vehicle of expression. He praises the Gaelic in the most shining phrases, assuring his readers that saints have proclaimed it the very speech of Heaven. One may cherish the hope of acquiring the language later, but meanwhile it is good on earth to enjoy Mr. Stephens in our native tongue. Remembering Mr. Stephens's booklet of verse entitled "Green Branches," a foreign admirer of his talent may modestly express a trust that the poet will not decline into politics nor dwindle to the Sinn Fein. A cause may be of more importance than a man, but the wells of poetry do not always make an oasis in the desert of politics—the springs themselves sometimes disappear and are lost beneath the sands.

In a volume of Mr. George Moore's trilogy of

calculated indiscretions, "Hail and Farewell," there is a page of much interest devoted to Mr. Stephens. It tells how Mr. George Russell was attracted by poems appearing week by week in the columns of "Sinn Fein" under the signature of James Stephens. He discovered the poet to be a typist and shorthand clerk in a solicitor's office in Dublin. Singing birds are frequently discovered on strange perches, but more usually, for some obscure reason, they are caged in the various departments of the Civil Service. Mr. Russell did not know how Mr. Stephens had picked up his education and obtained employment in a lawyer's office, but he strove to interest his literary friends by telling them stories from the life of the new poet. He assured them that Mr. Stephens was a truer vagrant than Synge had ever been; that a poor boy, without education or a penny, he had wandered all over Ireland, and would have lost his life in Belfast from hunger had it not been for a charitable apple-woman. And with a quite uncanny prescience "Æ" delighted in the thought of the material the poet would have to draw upon later, when he turned from verse to prose, for, as he observed, "James Stephens has enough poetry in him to be a great prose writer."

It was not necessary for us to be told explicitly that Mr. Stephens is an Irishman. The fact is implicit in every line of his writings. That confusion in the use of "shall" and "will," which is the shibboleth of his tribe, betrays him. His picaresque romances are occupied with the country about which he wandered in youth, and with the

tinkers, pedlars, tramps, trickmen, and musickers he chanced on in his travels. He loves to dream of the Hosting of the Shee, and is more concerned with leprechauns, Angus Og, the god of Beauty, Dana, the mother of gods, and with the Irish mythology generally, than with Mary and the Saints. Indeed, it is curious how few of the more prominent authors of Ireland are Catholics. Mr. Stephens himself is to be counted amongst the moderns rather than with the mediaevalists. By the word " moderns " I do not mean to imply that Mr. Stephens is an experimentalist so far as the form of his writings is in question. His muse largely follows the beaten track, and is not rash in experiment. To use some suggestive words of his own, " A thought is a real thing, and words are only its raiment, but a thought is as shy as a virgin ; unless it is fittingly apparelled we may not look on its shadowy nakedness ; it will fly from us and only return again in the darkness crying in a thin, childish voice which we may not comprehend, until with aching minds, listening and divining, we at last fashion for it those symbols which are its protection and its banner." The raiment of needlework Mr. Stephens fashions for his maidens is undeniably exquisite, and I count him a modern by reason of his attitude and thought rather than because of his method of expression. He is modern in his insistence on individuality, and the right of the individual to live his or her own life. Modern in his refusal to accept anything on hearsay, " as our fathers have told us." And he is modern, too, in his shrinking from dogma, and

in the light-hearted manner in which he will cheerfully advance the most debatable of propositions.

> Good and bad, and right and wrong,
> Waive the silly words away.

The sentiment may be praiseworthy or blameworthy, but at least its coiner cannot be reckoned a mediaevalist.

Of Mr. Stephens's various volumes of prose the most considerable undoubtedly are "The Crock of Gold" and "The Demi-Gods." Which of these two witty and whimsical romances is the more delightful must depend upon a personal preference. As Mr. Stephens's own heroine remarked of her two lovers, "I can't make up my mind which of the men I'll take, for I like one as well as the other and better, and I'd as soon have one as the other and rather." Since a hard choice is necessary, I elect here to speak of "The Demi-Gods"—and at once regret my selection. "The Demi-Gods" is concerned with a very ancient theme—a theme as old as Genesis, the dealings of the sons of God with the daughters of men. It is a subject very dear to poet and legend. Do you recall, for instance, the story of Tsilla, whose hair, amongst that of women, was the first gold? Once upon a time, when the sons of God beheld that the daughters of men were fair, Tsilla—her pitcher upon her shoulder—went to draw water from the village well. By chance Phaëlim, the son of God, passed that way on an errand for his Master, and was amazed at the girl's beauty, for her eyes were

like stars, and her hair darker and heavier than night. He held out to her the lily he carried in his hand, and Tsilla flushed at the gift like any blush-rose. Evening after evening the lovers met by the well beneath the palm-trees, whilst Phaëlim told of his journeyings for his Master amongst the far-off stars. Then Tsilla cried, " O Phaëlim, let me gaze closer on those stars which you have said so often are less shining than my eyes." So, wrapped within her lover's wing, Tsilla drew near to the wheeling planets, and heard the music of the spheres. Then growing bolder yet, Tsilla whispered, " O Phaëlim, grant me to approach even to the sun." So the angel pursued his course till he came to the very sun, and about the lovers poured that awful cataract of unendurable light. It was yet dark when Tsilla returned to her home, but as she passed through the village street it seemed to the sleepers like the first glimmering of dawn. For the source of light had changed her dark locks to his own colour, and first amongst the daughters of Eve went Tsilla, beautiful, with hair of streaming gold.

In its essentials the story of Tsilla is the theme of " The Demi-Gods," only Tsilla's name has become Mary, the wells and palm-trees of Palestine have turned to the roads and bypaths of Ireland, and the lovers journey not alone, but in the company of those tinkers and tramps whose acquaintance was made by Mr. Stephens in his early wanderings. Modern fiction, indeed, has been much occupied with this subject. Mr. Wells's " Wonderful Visit " dealt with similar material,

but Mr. Wells and his angel are somewhat too concerned with the tidying up of a world which offends their fastidious sense of decorum. Anatole France fashioned his " Révolte des Anges " from the same motive. It is inevitable, however, that when a story is charged with so heavy a load of moral dynamite, attention is distracted from the vehicle to its contents. Mr. Stephens's story remains more artistically complete in its self-imposed limits, and since it is treated with a simplicity beyond praise, with an almost lyrical sense of narrative, it may be weighed in the balance against the work of these two famous novelists who have dealt with the selfsame theme, and will not be found wanting.

Mr. Stephens's poetry has been the occasion of sharp division between excellent connoisseurs of verse. The truth seems to be that whilst his most successful poems are easily amongst the most delightful of our day, his flight is not sustained always on a level wing. If Mr. Stephens could have remained at the height of " The River," one of the most delectable chapbooks published at the Sign of Flying Fame, his reputation would be even greater than it actually is. The gift of narrative, which is so noticeable a feature of his prose, is not equally under his control in verse, for he is essentially a lyric poet. Mr. Stephens's lyrics are remarkable for their inspiration and rhetoric. His is no pedestrian muse with tame feet, but rather she is fledged with wings. It is strange that the verse of so fervid an Irishman should draw so little from his country's wells. We do not think

of Mr. Yeats as we read, but rather of Browning and Swinburne, whose metres are reproduced. Stevenson's "Child's Garden of Verses" is laid under contribution, and John Davidson's "Thirty Bob a Week" is not forgotten. Perhaps community in trouble made both poets feel the force of the Prophet Haggai's observation, "He that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

One of the more recent of Mr. Stephens's volumes of verse contains a foreword by his publishers that the book consists of three poems which form an inseparable whole, and are his poetic tribute to Ireland. The first is full of regret that he has sung no national theme worthily. The second was written after the rebellion of Easter week. The third is a short, buoyant, and fearless expression of hope for the future.

I emphasize again my sincere wish that an exquisite poet and novelist may not be swallowed up quick by the shifting sands of politics.

Mr. John Masefield

A HAPPY opportunity presents itself to speak of Mr. Masefield's work and personality in the publication of "Lollingdon Downs and Other Poems." It may well be that this volume will not achieve the surprising success of some earlier poems by the same writer. It is not a continuous narrative, and the eternal child in us all gladly welcomes a tale. It consists mainly of sonnets, and this form of verse—though dear to poets—is regarded by the public with a quite singular disfavour. It is true that the sonnets are cast in the Shakespearean mould, and thus, since they flow more freely than in the stricter Italian model, afford some mitigation of discomfort to the general reader. But "Lollingdon Downs" reveals a phase of Mr. Masefield's personality—perhaps the most important phase—in a fuller degree than any previous volume. His true gift, the unique grace vouchsafed to him, is surely his exquisite sense of beauty, and the privilege to express his dream in lovely sensitive words. There is a sonnet of his, beginning "Roses are Beauty," so flawless in thought, so perfect in phrasing, so instinct with rapture, that I cannot conceive it will ever pass out of our literature. I copied it from the privately printed volume in which it first appeared. The book was placed open in the window of a city bookshop I know, marked "a great sonnet," and passers-by, having read, went in to inquire the

name of the writer. Mr. Masefield, indeed, is as concerned with the idea of beauty as Mr. Yeats himself. This is no mere facile delight in the more kindly and familiar aspects of nature, or of life, for he has illusions about neither. He is thinker as well as maker, and has touched life and nature too closely, at first hand, not to see beneath the surface of appearances. Mr. Masefield believes that for "three flaming moments" we have to endure the crucifixion of years, and that "we tread a scene red to the eye with blood of living things."

It will be gathered that "Lollingdon Downs" is distinctly middle-aged. The lights are indeed turned down, and for this reason (amongst others) the poems are neither so delightful nor so considerable as those included in "Ballads and Poems." The lyrics of that earlier volume have all the quality of beauty, all the magic, of this later book, but they have likewise a freshness and an ardour which the years inevitably take away. They have the music of youth, the idealism of youth, the joy and the vision of youth. Derivative certain of these lyrics may be, but to the lover of poetry "Ballads and Poems" remains Mr. Masefield's true rose-garden, whence the spices flow out.

There is one poem in "Lollingdon Downs" which has little in common with the rest of the book. The poem bears no title, but in a cheap reprint is named "The Cold Cotswolds." It is concerned with a murder, and belongs really to that order of narratives in verse which made Mr. Masefield the most widely read and discussed of

contemporary poets. Of that series "The Everlasting Mercy" and "The Widow in the Bye Street" are the most arresting examples. It is not necessary to summarize these narratives. They have been vehemently attacked, and as vehemently defended. They have become the flag of a school. I say quite frankly that with much of this portion of Mr. Masefield's work I have an imperfect sympathy. Better judges of poetry than the present writer are fortunate enough to admire it unreservedly. Admittedly the tales are told by a poet who is a born master of narrative. There, at least, every competent critic must be at one. These stories, undoubtedly, are accomplished pieces of tale-telling. But when this is granted there remains much on which issue may be joined. The brutality of these tales is defended on the grounds that they point an excellent moral, but the novels of the Reverend Mr. Zola (to use Stevenson's phrase) may be palliated by a precisely similar argument. Moreover, any objection I have to them is based on purely artistic considerations, and has nothing whatever to do with the moral, which certainly is all that can be desired. Nor am I reconciled when told that not only does the narrative move, but that the characters are living beings. They are, they positively riot with life, after the fashion of a Flemish picture, and in language so crude as to make Mr. Squire's wicked parody less a burlesque than a simple transcript. And to finish with the ungracious business of fault-finding, I do not think that the sharp effects of light and shade obtained by Mr. Masefield's

method—the heightening of his passages of emotional beauty by ugly deeds—are sufficient compensations for a narrative essentially prosaic and harsh. As Flaubert said, it is the thread makes the necklace, not the beads.

It may appear odd at first sight that the delicate dreamer and the writer of realistic fiction in verse are combined in one and the same person. Of course it is not strange really. Sir James Barrie's playlet of "Seven Women" has familiarized us with the fact that seven distinct personalities can contrive to exist in one woman. It is very possible that the circumstances of Mr. Masefield's life have grafted various characteristics on the original stem. It is understood he is not anxious to gratify the public taste for autobiography, and that, silent and sensitive, he prefers to keep his own secret. Like Sir Thomas Browne he is not disposed to "galliardize in company." Nevertheless it is possible to gather certain details of his life from his books, for all art consists in revelation, and no artist may withdraw himself from the work of his hands. Mr. Masefield was born in the West of England, and many of his poems deal with the familiar Gloucester landscape and associations, some quite curiously in the distinctive fashion of Mr. A. E. Housman. But the golden instants of his life were afforded him by the sea. On this he trafficked as a sailor before the mast, gathering at first hand many of his magical prose stories, and learning there of the beauty and terror he fashioned so hauntingly into rhyme. Then an adventurous sojourn in America introduced him to odd

experiences and strange companions, so that as a bar-tender, after a hard day's work, " at about 2 to 2.30 a.m., I took a tot of whisky, and went to my garret, where I read the ' Morte d'Arthur,' my only book, until I fell asleep." Then came the lonely years in Bloomsbury lodgings, his friendship with Mr. Yeats and Synge, and fame. " Bar-tender and student of Malory "—here, surely, are two strands of the tangled yarn constituting Mr. Masefield's genius.

I have referred immediately above to Mr. Masefield's prose. If at times his poetry seems to go less enticingly than we could wish, his prose moves unfailingly on a high level of distinction. It is strange that the lesser vehicle should receive the more considerable treatment. Mr. Masefield's method is the precise opposite to that of his distinguished contemporary, Henri de Regnier. The poems of the French artist are composed with an extreme refinement, whilst his novels show something of the roughness we find in Mr. Masefield's verse. If a distinction must be made between a writer's work in poetry and prose, I cannot but think the Frenchman shows the finer sense of the distinctive qualities of his medium. To the taste of the present writer the most delightful and characteristic of Mr. Masefield's prose is gathered together in " A Mainsail Haul." These legends and stories of the sea are bright with colour and heavy with scent. They are so richly illuminated, so fresh with the gaiety of youth, as inevitably to recall the " Ballads and Poems," to which they form a kind of prose complement. In my judg-

ment these two volumes are the very pick of the Masefield basket.

Since the unparalleled catastrophe of the war fell upon us, Mr. Masefield has been doing his bit. He has also written the prose epic of "Gallipoli," a narrative entirely worthy of the heroism it commemorates. With a flash of genius Mr. Masefield prefixed to the various chapters of the great story certain quotations from the "Song of Roland," that marvellous record of an ancient battle against much the same foe. "Gallipoli" counts, with "Mr. Britling" and Rupert Brooke's handful of sonnets, as one of the three books the war has produced. And this may be the proudest of Mr. Masefield's many distinctions.

Mr. John Drinkwater

MR. JOHN DRINKWATER has attained a very enviable position in general esteem both as poet and dramatist. His poetry is of concern to that somewhat inconsiderable section of the public interested in things of the mind, whilst his play, "Abraham Lincoln," constructed without the slightest deference to the necessities of the commercial drama, actually ran in a London suburb for many consecutive weeks. Mr. Drinkwater, doubtless, is poet and playwright born, but this measure of success is a testimonial not only to his natural gifts, but also to the sedulous and laborious care which he has devoted to the perfecting of his art. In addition to some exquisite volumes of verse and to very distinguished work for the stage, Mr. Drinkwater has published much critical prose. This prose is occupied mainly with studies in the two arts in which the writer excels. It includes monographs on Morris and Swinburne; an essay on the "Lyric"; and papers on such matters as "The Nature of Drama" and "St. John Hankin." These writings contain much pregnant and scholarly criticism, they are finely and even richly phrased, but, on the whole, admirable as they are, their author's original work is to be preferred before them. Their essential value is in the light they cast upon the movements of Mr. Drinkwater's mind. Of course the personal preferences and judgments of any artist necessarily

must be implicit in his work. You cannot jump off your shadow, nor deny the labour of your own hands. But criticism is a delicate business, and sensitive fingers are needed to disentangle the mingled yarn. When, however, a poet or dramatist publishes essays on the masters of his craft, these furtive preferences and judgments become explicit and quite definitely plain. The prose writings of Mr. Drinkwater furnish a commentary on the great, limpid stream of English literature, to which his poetry is a not unimportant tributary. Like that poetry they are classical in substance and in form, yet are practically without distinctively classical references, and are strangely uninfluenced by foreign, or by any than native writers. He traces that sacred flood from its source in Chaucer, through the quiet reaches of Gray, beneath the magic skies of Coleridge, to the swan song that Rupert Brooke uttered upon its breast. The literature of England suffices for his spirit, even as her landscape is sufficient for his heart. Mr. Drinkwater is a very alert and suggestive critic, more especially on abstract subjects, but he is very human and far from being faultily faultless. At times his divining rod seems to fail him. It turns in his hand where little water is to be found. He is liable to stress the qualities of certain modern writers with whom friendship brought him into contact, and to over-estimate the value of their work. It is a good fault, for not all of us err in indulgence of our friends. To redress the balance he is disposed occasionally to be a little grudging in praise of some dead poet with whom he

is not in perfect sympathy. But relieved from personalities, and concerned with those abstract principles—such as "Poetry and Conduct," or "The Nature of Drama"—in which he is immediately interested, Mr. Drinkwater's essays are of enduring concern. Indeed, it scarcely can be imputed to them as a fault that their ultimate merit is the light they throw upon Mr. Drinkwater's mind as exhibited in his poetry and his plays.

Mr. Drinkwater entertains a high ideal of the office of the poet. To him it is the greatest of all distinctions, and its own exceeding great reward. This is fortunate, for the profession seldom has any other. A love of poetry is not generally necessary to salvation, or few indeed would be saved. In an essay to which reference already has been made, Mr. Drinkwater dwells upon the function of poetry in what may be considered as the spiritual sphere. His suggestion is not that poetry should occupy the pulpit and preach morals, but rather that it should add dignity and intensity to our interests, and form a sensitive social conscience for the individual life. "Contact with fine poetry is precisely contact with most vital and personal experience, conveyed to us in the most persuasive medium invented by man for habitual intercourse—pregnant and living words." The pronouncement of a brother poet on the same subject was somewhat different: "If we have preaching to do, in heaven's name let us call it a sermon and write it in prose. It is not the poet's business to save man's soul, but to make it worth

saving." Flecker's thought was that the Beauty he so piously worshipped should make valuable a thing not in itself of any worth. Holding such views as these it is natural and characteristic that Mr. Drinkwater should select from the innumerable definitions of poetry swarming in the language that of Coleridge, " Poetry—the best words in the best order " ; and should shortly after add his gloss, " The poet's perfect expression is the token of a perfect experience." The whole of Mr. Drinkwater's verse bears convincing witness to his impassioned pursuit of the perfect word in the flawless form, and not every poet has so little to regret in the choice of the experiences he has chosen for the public delectation Take, by way of example, the volume of " Poems 1908–1914." This book contains a selection from four slender white-bound volumes published between those dates, and includes all the shorter poems which their author is anxious to preserve. It does not comprise " Cromwell," a sequence of episodes in contrasted metres, together with blank verse, the most magnificent vehicle of expression in our language. It may be said at once that a very rigorous and searching criticism has been applied by Mr. Drinkwater to his own work, and that it is unlikely any outside judgment would have proven so drastic. " Poems " essays verse in many forms —the lyric, the ballad, the prologue for masque or play. It is not suggested that the lyrics are all compact of fire and music, in the sense that such a phrase could be applied to Shelley, for Mr. Drinkwater is nothing if not deliberate, and every

method carries with it its corresponding disadvantage. But here at least is a body of poetry based upon ideas transfigured through the imagination, and expressed with a measure and a felicity stimulating in the highest degree to the fitting reader. To read such poetry aloud is a delight; to be privileged to hear it read by the man who necessarily understands it best is a revelation. I should not like this appreciation of "Poems 1908–1914" to be limited to that book. It applies also to Mr. Drinkwater's subsequent work. "The Carver in Stone" in fundamental brainwork rivals Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie, and I know no higher praise. Also there is included in "Olton Pools" so delightful a piece of sheer singing, commencing:

> Lord Rameses of Egypt sighed
> Because a summer evening passed;
> And little Ariadne cried
> That summer fancy fell at last
> To dust; and young Verona died
> When beauty's hour was overcast.

that I trust some readers of this paper will turn to the poem to complete the quotation.

Mr. Drinkwater may write on Rameses or Lincoln if he will. The chief impression left on the mind of any observer is the peculiarly English quality of his work. He is more English than almost any other poet of his generation. Theme, landscape, his very tradition and moderation, alike betray his lineage. He goes his road untempted from the secure highway of our national literature either by foreign sirens, by rash experimentalism, or by Celtic will-o'-the-wisps. Certain singers of

our day deliberately sing false. Mr. Drinkwater remembers Pascal's dictum that "frogs love their own croaking," and keeps always true in time and tune. The pre-Raphaelite poets, who were the influences of his impressionable youth, were steeped in French and Italian poetry. Flecker—his most artistic contemporary—lay under the spell of the East, and was saturated with the heady perfumes of the bazaar. Mr. Drinkwater's most ambitious effort has Cromwell for its subject. When he relates the origin of roses, in a delightful legend adapted from a mediaeval traveller—which I grudge and complain to find excluded from "Poems"—it is without a suggestion of exotic atmosphere, although the scene is laid in Bethlehem. Those roses might well have blown in a Warwick garden in June. "Travel Talk" is the record of an excursion to the Lake District, and of a pious pilgrimage to places hallowed by association with Wordsworth's memory. Wordsworth, indeed, is a poet held by him in peculiar veneration and the essentially English character of his master need not be stressed. When he wishes to introduce a vivid piece of colour he turns to no tropical flora but is content to rely on some familiar and homely scene.

> Through a little farm parlour-door
> A floor
> Of red tiles and blue,
> And the air
> Sweet with the hot June sun cascading through
> The vine-leaves under the glass, and a scarlet fume
> Of geranium-flower, and soft and yellow bloom
> Of musk, and stains of scarlet and yellow glass.

After all, it is no matter for regret that a living poet has learned to sing to such purpose in our English school, and under masters who are excelled in their craft by none in any modern literature.

Allusion already has been made to Mr. Drinkwater's essay on " The Nature of Drama." He is also interested professionally in the theatre, both as producer of plays to the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and as a writer for the stage. There is no doubt that the serious and poetical drama of recent years has suffered a very dire eclipse. An inflamed passion for sensation, a craving for the lust of the eye as exploited by revues—these are " not for minds that are quiet, vigorous, and eagerly in touch with the simple and normal life that is so marvellously beautiful." The commercial theatre demands large houses and huge audiences, and the appeal to the greater number seldom results in the production of a work of art, which frequently makes its immediate claim on the few. A Stage Society or so in this monstrous London, and a few Repertory Theatres scattered over the length and breadth of the land, endeavoured to play Mrs. Partington with her broom, without conspicuous success. Till better days one has need of courage and tolerant patience, and resolve to make the best of a bad job until this tyranny be overpast. Mr. Drinkwater's plays " were not only written for the stage, they were written under the actual discipline of stage production, and their craftsmanship was learnt in a theatre." Three of these playlets have been published under the modest title of " Pawns."

These three plays have all sought the suffrages of the playgoer, and each with a reasonable amount of success. They are written in verse of dramatic quality, and possess those properties of tense situation and pictorial effectiveness necessary to the purposes of the stage. "The Storm" is built on one single emotional situation, after the fashion of Synge's "Riders to the Sea"; "The God of Quiet," with its image not unlike to Buddha in presence, and its ironic end, reminds one of the narratives by Lord Dunsany. Undoubtedly, however, the pick of the basket is the playlet curiously entitled "X = O: A Night of the Trojan War." This little drama is remarkably effective in dialogue, incident, and tragic beauty. It is quite short, but the theme undeniably awakens and sustains our impassioned interest to its close. On the windy plains before Troy town, towards the end of the ten years' war, two young Greeks talk together in the summer night of home, and of the interrupted life of home. They have not grown tardy in their duty, nor do they complain; but they remember the lovely things they have been compelled to put away. Salvius, too, recalls the poems he once wrote in a small room looking on the Ionian Sea, and his dreams of fame. So his comrade leaves him to take part in a raid upon the Trojan Wall. At the same hour two young Trojan soldiers are on that very wall, gazing out over the plain where the Greeks are encamped. They, too, converse together, Ilus of politics, and Capys of those rusty chisels and broken mallets with which of old he shaped the marble to make Troy magnifi-

cent ; and their conversation is interrupted only when Ilus departs on an errand similar to that of his Greek foeman. The end is easily foreseen. Poet and sculptor alike are slain, and the tragedy concludes with two very effective tableaux, singularly significant of the tragic theme.

There is, perhaps, another word to be said of these dramas. In a certain sense they are war plays. Written and produced since 1914, it is impossible to doubt that they are constructed deliberately to portray various emotions experienced by their author in regard to particular aspects of the war. " The Storm " is a parable of a yet wilder tempest, and of the tense apprehension known by many a wife awaiting her husband's return to home. The dagger struck to the heart of the God of Quiet is symbolic of the stroke dealt to the yet more noble figure of the Prince of Peace ; whilst the loss to art and to the amenities of life caused by the death of such an artist as Rupert Brooke is the thought underlying " X=O." It is impossible not to sympathize deeply with such generous emotions. I would suggest, however, that great principles override the most poignant emotions, and that had Mr. Drinkwater found it possible to have dwelt a little more on principles, and a little less on feelings, " Pawns " would be a more useful Tract for the Times even than it is at present.

Amongst Mr. Drinkwater's more recent stage productions are " Abraham Lincoln " and " Mary Stuart." The former is the dramatist's most popular success, and one thoroughly well deserved.

The play is excellent to read, but gains by presentation upon the boards, which, of course, is precisely as it should be. In common with the playwright's custom, " Abraham Lincoln " is a criticism of the life of to-day, though purporting to be a picture of the past. " The energy of morality, ardently desiring justice, sublimely lived by men who have made goodness great " always has been found by Mr. Drinkwater to a peculiar degree in his rugged hero. " Abraham Lincoln " is not so much a drama as a chronicle play. Indeed, it is not thoroughly understandable without some knowledge of Lincoln's life. His murder, for instance, is neither prepared nor explained, and is unintelligible except as a piece of history. But whilst there is little action, there is a steady progression of ideas throughout the play, and this, no doubt, is the author's aim. If a criticism may be hazarded by a student of books, it is this : a play should appeal to two senses, the eye and the ear. The latter sense is satisfied to the full by " Abraham Lincoln." I would suggest that not enough variety is afforded to the eye by the series of councils and committees which recur in too many of its acts. But here I end my fault-finding.

Mr. Jack B. Yeats, and the Poets of "A Broadside"

THE Broadsides issued by Miss E. C. Yeats from The Cuala Press are so beautiful and so fine that one fears they may come to despise the pit from which they have been digged. They are such delicate and hot-house flowers that it seems impossible they should derive from the common and hardy fauna which once upon a time blew so freshly over our country-side. At a first glance there appears nothing in common between this exotic page, with its wonderful designs by Mr. Jack B. Yeats, and the crude sheet, coarsely illustrated, hawked about our city lanes and rustic fairs. Yet relationship there certainly is between the lusty country wench and the courtly Irish lady, and the affinity is that of mother and child.

The Broadsheet originally represented the appeal of Poetry to Democracy, in its widest and cheapest form. The ballad was printed and illustrated with no adjunct of refinement, and was sold piping hot from the press to the singer, who hawked his wares around town and market commending them to likely purchasers by the aid of the tunes. These rhyme-sheets made small pretence to provide recreation and poetry for the fastidious. They were largely concerned with politics and the affairs of their hour, and the Reformers' Tree seldom affords a nest for the muses.

Not here, O Apollo!
Are haunts meet for thee.
But where Helicon breaks down
In cliff to the sea.

Apollo, perhaps "breaks down" more frequently than Helicon, when he strays amongst the briars of politics, or describes in rhyme the turning off from Tyburn gibbet of the last fashionable practitioner of High Toby. But the earlier broadside did not confine its interest to politics, nor was it content to be merely the newspaper of its day. In a time when books were few and prohibitively dear the broadside purveyed fiction in something of its variety of interest and diversity of source, and, greatly daring, even "discharged the functions of the modern pulpit, for in Saturday's market any staid householder could buy a sermon in verse to be sung or recited at whatever good exercise he used in his household on Sunday evening."

The Broadside and chapbook of our fathers were thought to be dead as Queen Anne, but our sophisticated age has witnessed a strange resurgence of interest in these derelicts, and has revived as a bibelot and toy what, to another age, was fiction and news and devotion. The persons chiefly instrumental in this development of taste undoubtedly are the proprietors of The Sign of Flying Fame and The Cuala Press. These printing presses put upon the market chapbooks and rhyme-sheets of such interest and quality as to attract the attention of a public ever curious after some new thing. The remarkable success of The Flying

Fame chapbooks needs no attempt at explanation. They ingratiated themselves with all lovers of literature because they were privileged to present the poems of a writer whose work in its simplicity and pictorial beauty was peculiarly adapted to such a method of publication. The rhyme-sheets issued at the same Sign seem to have been less fortunate. Despite the haunting charm of their verse, and the popular price at which that verse was offered, they may be considered almost a failure. We are told that children asked for them, and that several old women came in almost straight from the gin-shop to buy the twopenny rhyme-sheet after a long and critical examination of its contents in the window, but one swallow does not make a summer.

The Broadside of The Cuala Press, on the other hand, made no attempt whatever at a popular appeal. It was issued monthly in a limited edition of three hundred copies, printed on fine paper in luxurious type, with woodcuts—hand-coloured—by one of the foremost illustrators of his day, at the net price of one shilling. This is the very aristocrat amongst broadsheets, and was clearly fated and predestinate from birth to become the minion and delight of collectors. For the credit of their class I trust that every amateur of the beautiful has obtained a set of the Cuala broadside, since the issue has now come to an end. A complete set for the seven years of publication, contained in three portfolios, may yet be secured at something less than a five-pound note, and makes an excellent gift.

I cannot but think there is a certain incongruity between the lordly Cuala Broadside itself and the homely face of certain ballads of which it serves as the conveyance. In too many cases the verses are quite abashed by their fine setting, and overwhelmed altogether by the brilliance of the illustrations. The unsigned poems move frequently at a very pedestrian pace, and prove poor indeed when compared with the old anonymous ballads of the Borders. Those early ballads, now brought together and enshrined in imperishable collections, have indeed the art to exalt the mind, and pierce spirit and sense. Miss Yeats has chosen for her venture ballads set in a minor key, and moving decidedly on a lower plane. These deal with politics, with fiction, and with devotional matter, after the fashion of the hawkers' ballads of a not too illustrious past. Fortunately, however, not all the broadsides are so wanting in inspiration. Setting aside good work by such honoured dead as Mangan and Borrow, these broadsides include sensitive and impassioned verses by Ernest Rhys, and humorous and eerie poems from younger members of that Celtic school of whom Padraic Colum, James Stephens, and Seumas O'Sullivan may be taken as the type. John Masefield, too, is represented by an excellent and picturesque poem, written in those far-off days when he yet deemed buccaneers worthy of poetical treatment. As the boy died down into man he came to consider that a ruffian, without intelligence, was no fit subject for so divine an art as poetry. We can only congratulate ourselves that the printed word is difficult

to destroy and enjoy Mr. Masefield's fine poem which fittingly found pride of place in the very first number of "A Broadside." And in addition to the names I have mentioned there are others, less familiar to me, such as James Guthrie and Wolfe T. McGowan, whose work is equally good and happy in its setting.

However handsome "A Broadside" may be in appearance, however excellent in matter, it is the simple truth to admit that the honours of the venture are carried off by the illustrator, Mr. Jack B. Yeats. If paper and type were cheapened, if such-and-such a ballad-monger's verses were deleted, no doubt the rhyme-sheet might be the poorer, but should Mr. Yeats's drawings be withdrawn it simply would cease to exist. The illustrations are a perpetual joy. There must be two hundred of them all told, some in black and white, but many hand-coloured by the artist after printing. These drawings are largely concerned with certain phases of Irish life, life as seen by an artist whose curiosity is insatiable, and to whom nothing is common or unclean. The graces and minauderies of drawing-rooms are ignored. His type have not had the sharp edges of character ground smooth by social conventions, but move naturally about the fairs, the circuses, and the less reputable racecourses of their land. It is very evident that Mr. Yeats is an Irishman, and that his thoughts are much occupied with the aspects of his countrymen. Mr. Yeats, indeed, is the son of an Irish painter, and brother to the most essentially poetic of living writers. His youth was spent at Sligo,

considering the mystery of ships and sailors from the quays, wandering about the picturesque country-side, and attending sports, races, and fairs, where he observed much of incalculable value to his art. At the age of sixteen the lad removed to London, and studied at several of the more convenient schools in the neighbourhood of his home, finally adopting art as his profession.

Up to the present the success of Mr. Yeats's career has lain largely in his distinctive illustrations to books. His oil-paintings and water-colours have not been exhibited so frequently as many could wish. This is a pity, for his sense of colour is rich and harmonious, and colour is of infinite aid to the decorative quality of his designs. How surely, for instance, in these Cuala drawings colour quickens the sense of beauty, making a woman's face sensitive and vivid as a flower! How surely, again, it heightens the feeling of drama, in the print, for example, where the strong man and the clown, in their fantastic raiment, dispute and wrangle jealously, amongst stage properties, over the circus-rider, whose wreathing white arms are visible above the canvas screen separating them from the ring! And if these things are done in the green leaf, what then should be done in the dry? For however brilliant and imaginative these Broadside drawings, it is obvious that many of them are to Mr. Yeats less work than play. They are the designs of Peter Pan, the boy who refuses to grow up. It is a pity they come too late to give pleasure to that chronic invalid of Samoa, who remains the type of eternal youth, for Stevenson must have

been their fervent admirer. These drawings deal with the pirates, the Indians, the marionettes, and the cowboys the great romance writer adored. The puppets are exhibited with a gaiety and a creepiness altogether after the master's heart, and their strings are jerked with a skill to which he would have borne rejoicing testimony. I fancy that Stevenson certainly would have been one of the earliest collectors of "A Broadside." But whether this be so or not, and whether these designs are man's work or boy's play, here at least are drawings of which Mr. Yeats can never be ashamed, and of which the amateur of beautiful things will never tire.

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